



Obama Vows to Hit Islamic State Harder

President Barack Obama speaks at the Pentagon, Monday, Dec. 14, 2015, about the fight against the Islamic State group following a National Security Council meeting. The president said the U.S. military and allied forces are hitting the Islamic State group harder than ever.

ROBERT BURNS
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama on Monday vowed to accelerate the U.S.-led military campaign against the Islamic State in both Syria and Iraq, implicitly acknowledging that progress has been too slow as the extremist group expands its reach with deadly attacks beyond the Middle East. Speaking at the Pentagon after meeting with his National Security Council, Obama revealed that a group of American special operations commandos has begun working with local fighters in Syria to “tighten the squeeze” on Raqqa, the extremists’ nominal capital. He cited this as an example of aggressive new action, in addition to

an intensified bombing of the oil infrastructure in Syria that provides much of the Islamic State’s revenue. The administration announced in late October that Obama had approved sending up to 50 special operations troops to Syria on the first open-ended mission by U.S. ground forces in Syria. Until now, U.S. officials had refused to say whether the American commandos had begun their mission. Obama said his strategy is moving ahead with “a great sense of urgency,” an assertion that critics say belies the slow pace of progress in Iraq and Syria. Drawing an implied contrast with military prescriptions offered by Republican presidential candi-

dates, including Ted Cruz’s call to “carpet bomb them into oblivion,” Obama said, “We have to be smart, targeting ISIL surgically, with precision” airstrikes while local forces do the ground combat. As national security takes center stage in the presidential race, Obama also is hoping to counter Donald Trump and his inflammatory remarks about Muslims, which Obama believes endangers U.S. national security. On a conference call Monday with religious leaders, top White House officials pledged vigilance by the Justice Department in pursuing hate crimes and other civil rights violations, calling an attack on any

(AP Photo/Evan Vucci)
faith an attack on all faiths. Obama’s aides were also holding separate meetings at the White House with Muslim leaders and with Sikh leaders. The president’s appearance at the Pentagon was part of a weeklong push to explain his strategy for stopping the Islamic State group abroad and its sympathizers at home. Obama is scheduled to attend a briefing at the National Counterterrorism Center on Thursday. He noted that his defense secretary, Ash Carter, departed Monday for Turkey and the Middle East to seek more coalition military contributions to the counter-IS campaign.

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Kerry heads to Moscow for tough Syria, Ukraine talks

MATTHEW LEE

AP Diplomatic Writer

PARIS (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry is heading to Russia to try and narrow gaps with Russian leaders over a political transition

compare notes on the results of a conference of Syrian opposition figures held last week in Saudi Arabia that are key to the peace effort.

The trip will be Kerry's sec-

ty to discuss the talks, said a meeting in Geneva on Friday between Russian and American diplomats on Syria was aimed mainly at clearing up Russian "grievances" ahead of Tuesday's

militaries while both are conducting airstrikes in Syria.

Russia says its airstrikes since late September have targeted the Islamic State, but Western governments claim mostly moderate rebels are being hit and that Moscow is primarily concerned with shoring up Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Assad's future and his potential role in the political transition will be prime topics of Kerry's conversation with Putin and Lavrov, according to U.S. officials who say the results of the meetings will determine whether or not a new international diplomatic conference on Syria will go ahead as planned at the United Nations on Friday. Russia has consistently said Assad's future is for the Syrian people to decide, while the U.S. and many of its allies insist that he go, although they have softened their stance somewhat to allow Assad to play some kind of role in the transition.

Syrian opposition groups, however, demand that Assad leave at the start of the process — a point they reiterated at last week's meeting in Saudi Arabia — which is supposed to begin in early January, once the opposition groups have settled on a delegation to negotiate with the government. At the same time, Russia objects to the inclusion in the opposition of

groups it considers to be terrorist organizations that would not be eligible for a cease-fire planned to take effect simultaneously with, or shortly after, the start of negotiations.

State Department spokesman John Kirby in Washington rejected Russian claims of preconditions that must be reached for the next round of international Syria talks to take place in New York on Friday.

One senior official traveling with Kerry said he would be exploring ways to bridge gaps on both the political transition and the cease-fire as well as making the point that Russia's military operations in Syria need to focus on the Islamic State. The official, who was not authorized to speak publicly about Kerry's meetings and spoke on condition of anonymity, said that despite previous similar calls, a lot of Russian airstrikes continue to go toward Syrian rebels.

The official said Kerry would also be inquiring about recent comments from Putin and Russian military officers suggesting that Moscow is supplying the Free Syrian Army, which is opposed to Assad, with air support and weapons.

The U.S. and Russia are also at odds over Ukraine, where the U.S. says Russia's continued support for separatists in the east is destabilizing and prevents any end to hostilities. □



U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, center, speaks with Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir during a meeting in Paris, Monday, Dec. 14, 2015. Kerry is heading to Russia to try and narrow gaps with Russian leaders over a political transition to end Syria's civil war and restore stability in eastern Ukraine.

(AP Photo/Christophe Ena)

to end Syria's civil war and restore stability in eastern Ukraine.

After spending last week at climate talks outside the French capital, Kerry left Paris on Monday for Moscow, where he will meet Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Tuesday. Before departing, Kerry will attend a French-hosted foreign ministers meeting to

ond to Russia this year — he met with Putin in the Black Sea resort of Sochi in May — but his first since frosty relations over Ukraine were exacerbated by Moscow's intervention in Syria in late September. President Barack Obama has seen Putin briefly twice since then at international summits in Turkey and France.

A U.S. diplomat in Paris, who demanded anonymi-

Moscow meeting.

A statement issued by the Russian Foreign Ministry aired some of those grievances, saying that Moscow "will continue to seek a revision of the U.S. administration policy based on dividing terrorists into a 'bad' and 'good' ones" and complaining that the U.S. was unwilling to engage in "full-fledged coordination" between the two powers'

UN wants world leaders to sign climate deal on April 22

EDITH M. LEDERER

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) —

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said Monday he is inviting world leaders to the United Nations on April 22 — Earth Day — to sign the landmark agreement to tackle climate change that was reached in Paris.

Ban told reporters he wants leaders of the nearly 200 countries that approved the deal on Saturday to come to U.N. headquarters on the day it opens for signature "because this will be the first-ever universal climate change agreement."

He said the United Nations is also organizing an "action summit" on May 5-6 for governments, business and civil society to focus on implementing the deal.

Ban has made climate change a top priority from the day he became secretary-general nearly nine years ago. He tried to rally support for an agreement with every leader he met, warning that global warming was threatening the planet.

He spent much of the last two weeks in Paris and was exuberant when he talked to reporters after returning

to New York.

The countries of the world have made "a historic choice" in deciding to work together to address "the defining challenge of our times," Ban said.

He called it the most significant action in years to uphold the U.N. Charter's mandate to "save succeeding generations."

The agreement is the first to ask all countries to join the fight against global warming and represents a major change in U.N. action that previously required only wealthy nations to reduce their greenhouse gas emis-

sions. Its aim is to keep global temperatures from rising another degree Celsius (1.8 Fahrenheit) between now and 2100, a key demand of poor countries ravaged by rising sea levels and other effects of climate change.

"The Paris Agreement sends a clear signal that the transformation of the global economy to low-emission, climate-resilient growth is inevitable, beneficial and already under way," Ban said. "It will save lives, improve human well-being and promote more peaceful, stable societies." Janos Pasztor, the assistant

secretary-general on climate change, said the plans submitted by 188 countries to address climate change represent "a firm floor" for future action, noting that all countries are required to submit updated plans every five years which must be "no less ambitious."

After countries sign the agreement, at least 55 countries representing at least 55 percent of global emissions must ratify it before it can take effect. Pasztor said the goal is to have the agreement take effect in 2020. □

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Obama vows to hit IS harder, says commandos now in Syria

Continued from Front

He also sent Secretary of State John Kerry to Moscow to try to narrow gaps with Russia over a political transition to end Syria's civil war.

The president's string of terror-related appearances this week, shortly before Christmas, comes amid public jitters about the specter of extremism after deadly attacks in California and Paris.

Seven in 10 Americans rate the risk of an attack in the U.S. as at least somewhat high, according to an Associated Press-GfK poll — a sharp increase from the five in 10 who said that in January. Just 28 percent in the survey said Obama had clearly explained the United States' goals in fighting the Islamic



President Barack Obama sits with Vice President Joe Biden and talks with Defense Secretary Ash Carter during a meeting with the National Security Council about the fight against the Islamic State group, Monday, Dec. 14, 2015, at the Pentagon. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

State, while 68 percent said he had not. Only a little over a week

ago Obama sought to allay concerns in an Oval Office address, but critics said

his words failed to reassure. "The American people are smart enough to know

when something is working or not, and it's obvious that the president's current strategy isn't working," House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-California, said in response to Obama's appearance at the Pentagon.

Speaking with top military leaders at his side, including Gen. Lloyd Austin, the Central Command chief who is spearheading the counter-IS campaign, Obama cited a range of evidence that IS is weakening, including what he called instances of its fighters defecting and its territory shrinking. But he also acknowledged that recent terrorists attacks, including those in Paris and San Bernardino, illustrate the need to hit IS harder.

"We recognize that progress needs to keep coming faster," Obama said. □

AP Poll:

Americans want to get tougher with the Islamic State

KEN DILANIAN
EMILY SWANSON
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After terrorist attacks at home and abroad, more Americans than ever — but still less than half — support sending U.S. ground troops to fight the Islamic State, according to a new Associated Press-GfK Poll. A large majority also want a clearer explanation from President Barack Obama about his strategy to defeat the group.

The percentage of Americans who favor deploying U.S. troops to fight IS

militants has risen from 31 percent to 42 percent over the past year in AP-GfK polling, although it isn't clear whether those respondents favor a small contingent or a larger ground force that might engage in another protracted Middle Eastern war. Other national surveys in recent weeks have found similar or greater support for American ground troops.

Obama recently dispatched about 50 special operations forces to coordinate the fight in Syria, adding to the more than 3,000 troops already in Iraq. But he and most other poli-

ticians oppose sending a large American contingent to augment the U.S.-led coalition air campaign. Most Republicans running for president have not called for that, either, although Donald Trump recently said he would support 10,000 troops, a figure originally floated by Sen. Lindsey Graham.

Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton has pledged to keep American troops out of Syria, saying she would resist sending forces to fight Islamic militants even if there's another terrorist attack within the U.S.

In the poll, 56 percent of Americans said the U.S. military response to the Islamic State group has not gone far enough, up from 46 percent since October 2014. Six in 10 Republicans, but only about 3 in 10 Democrats or independents, support sending ground troops, the poll showed.

Analysts say the public desire for more action reflects growing anxiety over the Islamic State after its attack in Paris, and the shootings in San Bernardino, California, carried out by a couple apparently inspired by the group. There is also

widespread unease about Obama's strategy, which envisions a long, slow campaign of airstrikes, diplomacy, training, financial sanctions and other measures.

But Obama has pointedly made the case against a U.S. ground invasion. The U.S. military could clear the Islamic State from its headquarters in Raqqa, Syria, but IS troops would return unless a local ground force was available to keep order, he said Nov. 16, after the attacks in Paris. "Let's assume that we were to send 50,000 troops into Syria," Obama said. □

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At Press Time:

Baltimore jury mulls officer's fate in Freddie Gray's death



Baltimore City police officer William Porter, center, one of six police officers charged in connection to the death of Freddie Gray, leaves Courthouse East after his trial has gone into juror deliberation, Monday, Dec. 14, 2015 in Baltimore.

(Kenneth K. Lam/Baltimore Sun via AP)

JULIET LINDERMAN
BRIAN WITTE

Associated Press
BALTIMORE (AP) —

Baltimore anxiously awaited a verdict Monday as jurors deliberated the fate of the first of six officers to be tried

in the death of Freddie Gray, a black man whose neck was broken in the back of a police van, adding fuel to the "Black Lives Matter" movement. Prosecutors described Officer William Porter as in-

different to Gray's safety, repeatedly denying him medical care after he was left handcuffed and shackled but unbuckled inside a metal compartment, where he was vulnerable to a serious injury if the van

stopped suddenly.

The wagon "became his casket on wheels" after Porter failed to belt him to the bench or call for a medic after he was injured, prosecutor Janice Bledsoe said in her closing arguments. Gray was arrested about seven city blocks from the station, and yet police stopped the van repeatedly and the trip became a 45-minute journey. "With great power comes great responsibility," Bledsoe said. "Porter had the opportunity on four or five occasions to wield his power to save Freddie Gray. He abused his power. He failed his responsibility."

Porter testified that he did nothing wrong to Gray, who was arrested after running from officers in his neighborhood, and his attorney Joseph Murtha said nothing more than conjecture and speculation implicates his client. Gray's death was a "horrific tragedy," Murtha said, but "there is literally no evidence" that Porter caused it.

"The absence of real evidence raises much more than reasonable doubt," Murtha told jurors. "This case is based on rush to judgment and fear. What's an acronym for fear? False evidence appears real." Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake urged citizens on Monday to respect the jury's decision and go about business as usual. The city also opened an emergency operations center and contacted outside law enforcement agencies to coordinate any response, and the schools chief urged parents to help avoid a repeat of last April's unrest.

Demonstrations were initially peaceful following the death of Freddie Gray on April 19, but scattered violence broke out after his funeral, and quickly escalated when high school students converged on a mall and threw rocks, bottles and bricks at police. Eventually, the National Guard was deployed to help contain some of the city's worst rioting since 1968. Baltimore City Public Schools CEO Gregory Thornton sent a letter home with students Monday warning that "student walkouts, vandalism, civil disorder and any form of violence are not acceptable" and will result in consequences. Porter faces up to 25 years in prison if convicted of all charges: manslaughter, assault, reckless endangerment and misconduct in office. □

Newtown marks 3rd anniversary of school shooting

NEWTOWN, Connecticut (AP) — Flags were flying at half-staff Monday across Connecticut in honor of the 26 people killed three years ago in the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown.

The town did not have any memorial events planned, although houses of worship held remembrance events

and local groups offered counseling and support services for residents who might want to use them. On the morning of Dec. 14, 2012, a gunman shot his way into the school and gunned down 20 first-grade children and six educators. Adam Lanza fatally shot his mother inside their home before carrying out

the rampage and then killing himself.

The anniversary fell on a school day this year for the first time, and Newtown education officials deliberated before deciding to leave schools open. They were trying to keep to routines Monday, but staff at lower-grade schools offered parents, if requested,

talking points on how to discuss the shootings with their children.

A new Sandy Hook school is set to open in autumn of 2016 at the site of the school that was demolished after the shooting. In the meantime, Sandy Hook students are taking classes in a building in the neighboring town of Monroe. □

US Army sergeant to face desertion charge in court-martial

DEB RIECHMANN

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP)—Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, who was held by the Taliban for five years and freed in exchange for five detainees in Guantanamo Bay, will face charges of desertion and misbehavior before the enemy in a general court-martial, instead of a misdemeanor-level forum, the U.S. Army announced Monday.

A date for an arraignment hearing at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, will be announced later.

Bergdahl's attorney, Eugene Fidell, said the convening authority — a high-ranking officer charged with deciding whether evidence warrants a court-martial — did not follow the advice of a preliminary hearing officer.

Lt. Col. Mark Visger had recommended that Sgt. Bergdahl's case be referred to a special court martial, which is a misdemeanor-level forum. That limits the maximum punishment to reduction in rank, a bad-conduct discharge

and a term of up to a year in prison.

Bergdahl walked off his post in eastern Afghanistan's Paktika province on June 30, 2009, and was captured by the Taliban and held for nearly five years.

The U.S. Army Forces Command charged the 29-year-old Bergdahl on March 25 with "desertion with intent to shirk important or hazardous duty" and "misbehavior before the enemy by endangering the safety of a command, unit or place."

Separately, Fidell, a military justice expert who is also a visiting lecturer at Yale Law School, complained about political figures who



This image shows Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl. The attorney for Bergdahl, who was released in exchange for five Taliban detainees from Guantanamo Bay, says the soldier's case has been referred for trial by a general court-martial.

(AP Photo/U.S. Army)

have made derogatory statements about Bergdahl.

Fidell asked that GOP presidential candidate Donald Trump "cease his prejudicial months-long campaign of defamation against our client." Fidell previously has complained about Trump calling Bergdahl a traitor.

Fidell also asked the House and Senate Armed Services committees to avoid further statements "that prejudice our client's right to a fair trial." The House committee last week issued a 98-page report criticizing the Obama administration's decision to swap the five former Taliban leaders for Bergdahl. □

Ex-Illinois guardsman pleads guilty in IS plot

CHICAGO (AP) — A former Illinois National Guard soldier pleaded guilty Monday to charges alleging he conspired to provide material support to the Islamic State group.

Hasan Edmonds, 23, of Aurora, Illinois, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiring

to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization and one count of attempting to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization.

The pleas in Chicago federal court came one week after his cousin, Jonas Edmonds, 30, of Aurora,

pleaded guilty to similar charges. "Hasan and Jonas Edmonds conspired to provide material support to ISIL," John P. Carlin, assistant attorney general for national security, said in a news release, using one of the alternative names for the Islamic State group.

"They admitted planning to wage violence on behalf of ISIL in the Middle East and to conduct an attack on our soil." Prosecutors say Hasan Edmonds devised a plan for Hasan Edmonds to travel to the Middle East and join Islamic State fighters overseas. □



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Trump backers baffled by criticism of his Muslim proposal



Tracy Hooker talks about Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump at Rosie's Hot Dogs in Greer, S.C. Trump's supporters don't see his plan to ban Muslims from entering the U.S. as "xenophobic" or an "appeal to hate," but rather as an entirely reasonable response to a clear and present threat.

(AP Photo/Chuck Burton)

JILL COLVIN
BILL BARROW
Associated Press
GREER, South Carolina (AP) — Tracy Hooker isn't interested in debating the merits of Donald Trump's proposal to temporarily block Muslims from coming into the United States. She knows some people think it's bigoted. That others argue it's impractical, legally dubious or both. And that every other Republican running for president has, in some way or another, rejected the idea the plan is even worth talk-

ing about. That's why the hot dog stand worker in the conservative southern state of South Carolina says Trump is "my guy." In the wake of the attacks in Paris and shootings in San Bernardino, she and other Trump supporters say the Republican presidential frontrunner is the only one is taking on what they believe is a clear and present danger to America and its citizens. "Think about it. You don't know what you've got here. You've got no clue,"

she said of the Muslim tourists, immigrants and refugees Trump wants to temporarily bar from coming to the U.S. "You don't know if they like us. You don't know if they hate us," said Hooker, 47, of Greer, South Carolina. "You don't know why they're here." The widespread condemnation of the billionaire's plan is simply baffling to Hooker and the dozens of Trump supporters interviewed in the past week by The Associated Press in Iowa, New Hampshire and

South Carolina, the states that kick off the presidential nominating contests. "When you're in war, you have to take steps that are not American to protect yourself and defend the country," said Margaret Shontz, of Iowa, as she arrived at a Trump campaign stop in Des Moines on Friday. Iowa's Dale Witmer, 90, a registered Republican and World War II veteran who likes Trump and conservative Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, embraced the Muslim ban as a "great idea." He said he was taken aback by the backlash: "I don't know how to comprehend that." Trump made the proposal a week ago, releasing a statement on Dec. 7 that called for "a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what the hell is going on." An NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll released last week found that at 57 percent, a solid majority of Americans, oppose Trump's proposal. A CBS News poll also found nearly six-in-10 Americans opposed the ban, with two-thirds saying it goes against the country's founding

principles. But Republicans are far more receptive; 54 percent voiced support for the ban in the CBS poll. Trump's campaign said the proposed ban would apply to "everyone," including individuals seeking to immigrate to the U.S. as well as those looking to visit as tourists. As the week progressed, Trump began to fill in additional details. He said American citizens, including Muslim members of the military, would be exempt, as would certain world leaders and athletes coming to the U.S. to compete. "By the way, it's not total and complete. And it's temporary," Trump said Sunday in an interview with CNN. "You're going to have exceptions. You're going to have people coming in and you are going to get people in." New Hampshire state Rep. Stephen Stepanek, Trump's campaign co-chairman in the state, said the reaction to Trump's proposal fit the pattern of his campaign: First outrage, then a realization Trump hit the nail on the head. "He's always one step ahead of all the other politicians in pointing out a problem. And everybody's outraged. □

US looking at ways to better screen would-be immigrants

ALICIA A. CALDWELL
TAMI ABDOLLAH
Associated Press
WASHINGTON (AP) — The Obama administration is reviewing procedures for vetting would-be immigrants, with an eye toward examining applicants' online presence, to close security gaps in the U.S. visa system, the White House said Mon-

day. White House spokesman Josh Earnest said the Homeland Security and State departments have been asked to review the process for screening people who apply for visas and to return with specific recommendations. The Homeland Security Department said it is specifi-

cally reviewing policies on when authorities at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services can look at social media posts as part of the vetting process for would-be immigrants applying for certain visas. "I think the president's top priority here is the national security and safety of the American people," Earnest

said. "And that will continue to be the case with ensuring that this K-1 visa program is effectively implemented." Tashfeen Malik, a Pakistani woman who the FBI says carried out an attack with her husband in San Bernardino, California, that killed 14 people earlier this month,

came to the United States in 2014 on a K-1, or fiancé, visa. Earnest did not provide specifics of the security review for visas, but said one consideration going forward is resources. The government approved more than 9.9 million visa applications during the 2014 budget year. □





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US Financial Front:

As rate hike nears, Fed's hints on future to be scrutinized



Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen smiles on Capitol Hill in Washington. The worst-kept secret in the financial world is that the Federal Reserve is all but sure Wednesday to raise interest rates from record lows by a modest quarter point.

(AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin)

M. CRUTSINGER
 AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — It's not about what it will do. It's about what it will say. The worst-kept secret in the financial world is that the Federal Reserve is all but sure Wednesday to raise interest rates from record lows by a modest quarter point. On that, pretty much everyone agrees. The uncertainty hinges on what the Fed will say about how much and how fast it expects to raise rates again in coming months. A relatively aggressive pace would contribute to higher borrowing rates and risks slowing the economy. It could also roil financial markets. It isn't the message investors want to hear. They'd prefer for the Fed to signal that it foresees a slow and gradual series of rate hikes, one that would allow it to periodically assess whether the economy was sturdy enough to withstand higher rates.

The Fed has kept its benchmark short-term rate near zero since setting it there in 2008 to help save the finan-

cial system in the depths of the financial crisis. Now, with the job market all but fully healthy, the central bank is ready to begin lifting rates toward normal levels. Its policymakers have signaled in recent months that they foresee an incremental pace. But investors want further assurance Wednesday.

One factor that could keep the pace of hikes gradual is the absence of inflation pressures. In fact, inflation remains stubbornly below the Fed's 2 percent target level. This has resulted from global economic weakness, falling energy prices and a strong dollar, which makes imports cheaper in the United States.

Investors will scrutinize the Fed's statement and Chair Janet Yellen's news conference afterward for clues to what might cause an acceleration of rate increases over the next year.

"I am worried that the stronger dollar and falling oil prices have masked some underlying inflation pressures which could surface quickly as we move closer

to full employment," said David Jones, chief economist at DMJ Advisors.

Still, most economists think the statement the Fed will issue when its latest policy meeting ends and Yellen's remarks afterward will signal that while the Fed is ending an era of near-zero rates, it isn't planning a very fast liftoff.

"The Fed is going to package this announcement in a nice holiday box with a pretty ribbon on top," said Sung Won Sohn, an economics professor at California State University, Channel Islands. "There will be

plenty of soothing words that this is just a small step that has been in discussion for some time and future increases will be very slow and gradual."

Earlier this year, speculation had centered on the likelihood of a first hike occurring in September. But last summer, financial markets tumbled after China shocked investors by devaluing its currency, fanning fears that the world's second-largest economy was slowing more than anyone thought. The Fed chose to delay a hike. Still, Yellen continued to say

that a rate increase was likely before year's end.

The central bank's target for its federal funds rate — the interest that banks charge each other — has hovered between zero and 0.25 percent since December 2008. On Wednesday, it's expected to modestly raise that range to between 0.25 percent and 0.5 percent.

Some analysts say they think the Fed will then raise rates by a quarter-point once per quarter during 2016, totaling a 1 percentage point increase for the year. □



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Merkel tells her party Germany will reduce migrant influx

GEIR MOULSON
CHRISTOPH NOELTING
Associated Press

KARLSRUHE, Germany (AP) — Germany will reduce its migrant influx, Chancellor Angela Merkel promised Monday, insisting that she's still confident her diplomatic efforts will work and Europe will pass the "historic test" posed by the refugee crisis. Germany has seen about a million asylum-seekers arrive this year. Merkel has declared that "we will manage it," but some in her conservative bloc have urged a tougher approach.

"We want to, and will, appreciably reduce the number of refugees, because it's in everyone's interest," Merkel said in a confident



German Chancellor Angela Merkel speaks during a party convention of the Christian Democrats (CDU) in Karlsruhe, Germany, Monday, Dec. 14, 2015. Merkel faces a congress of her conservative party amid tensions over her management of the migrant influx.

(AP Photo/Michael Probst)

speech to her Christian Democratic Union that was greeted with a standing ovation. Still the chan-

cellor — who last week was named Time magazine's Person of the Year — stuck to her optimistic mantra, insisting that Germany can handle the migrant crisis "because it is part of the identity of our country to do great things." Her decision in early September to let in migrants who had

piled up in Hungary was "no more and no less than a humanitarian imperative," she added. Merkel has made clear that she wants to reduce the influx but has resisted calls to set a specific limit on the number of refugees Germany can take, arguing that she would risk making a promise that she can't keep. She stresses instead the importance of finding a diplomatic solution for the crisis with the rest of Europe and with Turkey, which is hosting as many as 2.2 million Syrian refugees. Ahead of Monday's conference, CDU leaders made some rhetorical concessions to members worried about Germany's ability to absorb more newcomers. The motion on the crisis presented to delegates said the party is determined to reduce the refugee influx through "effective measures," since "a continuation of the current influx would in the long term overburden the state and society." □



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Egypt's finding on Russian jet crash conflicting with others

NOUR YOUSSEF
Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Egypt said Monday it has not yet found any sign of terrorism in the deadly Oct. 31 crash of a Russian passenger jet in the Sinai desert, a preliminary finding that conflicts with Russian, U.S. and British statements that they believed a bomb on the aircraft probably was to blame.

The vaguely worded Egyptian statement reflected the deep reluctance among government authorities to point to the possibility of a bomb, and the implication of lax security at the Sharm el-Sheikh airport, where the Metrojet plane took off.

The Airbus A321-200 broke apart 23 minutes after departing the Red Sea resort for St. Petersburg, killing all 224 people aboard. The crash led Russia to halt all flights to and from Egypt, while Britain suspended

flights to and from the resort. The actions inflicted a heavy blow to Egypt's vital tourism industry.

Several officials involved in Egypt's investigation told The Associated Press that security gaps at the Sharm el-Sheikh airport were making finding a culprit more difficult, including poor video surveillance and the number of people who could enter the facility with only limited searches.

Soon after the crash, the U.S. and Britain said the plane probably was brought down by a bomb, in part citing chatter among militants in Sinai. On Nov. 17, Moscow also announced a bomb was to blame, saying its tests had found traces of TNT on luggage, personal effects and fragments of the plane. In response, Egyptian Prime Minister Sherif Ismail said only that his country would "bear in mind" the Russian conclusion. □

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Far right getting stronger despite score of 0 in French vote

SYLVIE CORBET
ELAINE GANLEY
Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Zero. That was the score of France's National Front in critical weekend elections, almost as surprising as its front-runner status going into the vote.

Yet, while voters may have denied the anti-immigration party the leadership of any of the country's regions, it picked up more votes than ever before, leaving opponents scrambling for a strategy to counter it.

Sunday's runoff in regional elections became a national referendum on the far right, which led handily in six of 13 regions after the first round a week earlier. The National Front has for decades been a thorn in the side of the French political class, the kingmaker in vote after vote. But since it began an image change in 2011 under party leader Marine Le Pen to scrub away the stigma of anti-Semitism clinging to it, the National Front has become a threat for both left and right.

It has made inroads in a series of recent elections, and experts declared after the Dec. 6 first round of voting that the anti-immigration party had become a third force in French politics, along with the conservative right and the governing Socialists.

The Socialists moved to the front line to block the party in two key regions — where Le Pen and her popular niece were running — by withdrawing their own candidates. And it worked. The northern Socialist bastion under threat from Marine Le Pen fell to the conservative right, as did the southern region of Provence-Alpes-Cote

d'Azur where 26-year-old lawmaker Marion Marechal-Le Pen had held the edge, and she too lost.

The deft tact was costly for the Socialists — who got nothing in return from the conservative right and who will have no one on the leadership councils in those regions for six years. In contrast, the left and right joined forces in 2002 to block party founder Jean-Marie Le Pen, Marine's firebrand father, from winning the presidency.

A leading figure in former President Nicolas Sarkozy's conservative party, Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet, said that if the Socialists hadn't acted this time, "our candidates tonight ... would have lost" against the Le Pens. "Voila. It's obvious."

In the four other regions where the National Front led, it was a week of tireless campaigning and voter fear of the far right that clearly made the difference.

"We avoided a catastrophe," said Parisian Sylviane Koch. While the Paris region was never expected to go to the far right, her remarks underscored the national dimension of the stakes.

There was no real victor in Sunday's vote. The political map changed, with wins in seven regions by the conservative right and five by the Socialists — who once controlled almost all regions — and one to a candidate unaffiliated with a political party.

But the wins were "joyless," Socialist Party leader Jean-Christophe Cambadellis said.

"The National Front hasn't been contained. ... It has momentum," he said on Europe 1 radio. □



Far right National Front party regional leader for southeastern France, Marion Marechal-Le Pen is approached by the press in Carpentras, southern France. While voters may have denied the National Front party the leadership of any of the country's regions, it picked up more votes than ever before. (AP Photo/Claude Paris)

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Syrian troops seize air base in rebel-held suburb

ZEINA KARAM

Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Syrian troops and allied militia-men seized control of a sprawling military air base near Damascus on Monday, bolstering the government's presence in a key area overwhelmingly controlled by opposition

forces.

The Marj al-Sultan air base lies in the eastern suburb of Damascus known as Eastern Ghouta, and had been held by rebels for the past three years.

The capture is a rare victory for the government in an area considered an opposition stronghold. It

bolsters the government's hold over Damascus International Airport and splits rebel-held areas.

The capture was reported by Al-Manar TV, the channel of Lebanon's Shiite Hezbollah group, whose fighters are battling alongside Syrian troops under Russian air cover.

Pro-government websites and the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which relies on activists inside Syria, also reported the capture of Marj al-Sultan on Monday.

Fighting on the ground in Syria has intensified even as the international community makes its most se-

rious push yet to restart peace talks between President Bashar Assad's government and the rebels.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry is heading to Russia for talks aimed at narrowing gaps with Russian leaders over a political transition to end the country's nearly five-year civil war. □

Abbas: Palestinian violence is "justified popular uprising"

M. DARAGHMEH

Associated Press

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP) — Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas referred to the last three months of violence Monday as a "justified popular uprising".

Abbas's comments came as a new poll shows widespread Palestinian support for ongoing attacks on Israelis. Later Monday, a Palestinian from east Jerusalem rammed his car into a crowded bus stop, wounding nine before bystanders shot him dead.

Israeli leaders have accused Abbas and other Palestinian leaders of inciting the violence with incendiary rhetoric. Abbas



Israeli police examine a car used in a vehicular attack in Jerusalem Monday, Dec. 14, 2015. A Palestinian rammed his car into a bus station wounding nine people before he was shot and killed by bystanders, police said. (AP Photo/Mahmoud Illean)

has previously refrained from either endorsing or condemning the attacks, often referring to the wave of violence as understandable but not in the best interests of the Palestinian people. "We cannot ask the youth why they are going out (to revolt)," Abbas said in Ramallah. "They just despaired of the two-state solution."

A poll released Monday found that two-thirds of Palestinians support the current wave of stabbings. Most Palestinians believe if the current individual attacks develop into an armed intifada, the violence might serve Palestinian national interests more than negotiations would. □

Ground fighting rages on in Yemen ahead of ceasefire

AHMED AL-HAJ

Associated Press

SANAA, Yemen (AP) — Fierce fighting was underway between forces loyal to Yemen's internationally recognized government and the country's Shiite rebels just hours before an agreed-on truce was supposed to start at midnight Monday, officials said.

The clashes, which were

taking place in Yemen's southern, central and western provinces, killed a total of 32 people, including 10 civilians, according to the security and medical officials.

There were also at least 16 people wounded across the country, said the officials who have remained neutral in Yemen's civil war. They spoke on condi-

tion of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to reporters.

Over the weekend, the warring sides had agreed to lay down their weapons at five minutes to midnight Monday — the eve of planned peace talks in Geneva. According to the deal, the truce is to last a week.

Yemen's conflict, which

pits rebels known as Houthis and army units loyal to a former president against a loose alliance of pro-government forces, southern separatists and other militants, has killed at least 5,878 people since March, when the fighting escalated after a Saudi-led air campaign began targeting the rebels, according to the United Nations.

Previous truces and U.N.-brokered talks to resolve the conflict have ended in failure, with the government demanding the implementation of a U.N. resolution calling on the Houthis to return arms seized from the state and withdraw from territory they had captured over the past year, including the capital, Sanaa. □

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Elimination of key export taxes puts Argentina on a new course

PETER PRENGAMAN
Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina

(AP) — Fulfilling a campaign promise to overhaul Argentina's agricultural sector, President Mauricio Macri on Monday announced the elimination of export taxes on key products, a move that will also have a deep impact on how Latin America's third largest economy is funded. Macri made the announcement while meeting with farmers in Pergamino, about 135 miles (220 kilometers) northeast of Buenos Aires. Starting Tuesday, export taxes will be eliminated on corn, wheat, meat and fish. Export taxes on soy beans will be lowered from 35 to 30 percent.

"Without the agricultural sector, the country can't move forward," Macri said in comments that were broadcast live.

The South American nation is one of the world's breadbaskets. However, the sector struggled amid frequent fights with former President Cristina Fernandez over the last eight years. She kept export taxes high to stimulate local consumption and keep the prices of bread, corn, meat and dairy products low at home.

The taxes were also a key part of financing her government, which spent heavily on social welfare programs for the poor.

Farmers argued that the taxes put a cloud over the industry and led to distortions in crop rotations and production. For example, because of low profits with corn, many farmers used more of their fields for soy beans, which brought in more money.

The high taxes also led to

massive hoarding, something that Fernandez's administration struggled to crack down on. Some economists estimate that the current amount of hoarded crops represent about \$13 billion in exports. Macri said farmers no longer would "have an excuse" to wait in hopes of better prices. He also promised to crack down on those who continued to hoard.

"We must stop being the world's barn to become the world's supermarket," said Macri, who ran on free-market principles and defeated Fernandez's chosen successor in elections in November.

Macri, who was inaugurated last week, is betting that opening up the sector will bring more badly needed revenue to state coffers than the high-tax model implemented by Fernandez, who argued the rural sector could and should pay a huge share of funding government.

But for much more money to come in, economists say the agricultural changes must be coupled with deeper, across-the-board reforms, such as eliminating restrictions on buying U.S. dollars that has created a booming black market. Currently, Argentina's official rate is around nine pesos to the dollar. On the black market, a dollar has fetched as much as 16 the last year. Problems in currency exchange markets have made operating difficult for farmers, who must deal heavily in dollars to both export crops and import heavy machinery. During the campaign, Macri promised to lift the restrictions but has not yet done so in the first days of his administration. □



Argentina's President Mauricio Macri, center, heads to the Buenos Aires Cathedral with members of the cabinet, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Macri on Monday announced the elimination of export taxes on key products. (AP Photo/Natasha Pisarenko)

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Haiti says Dec. 27 runoff to take place as scheduled

DAVID McFADDEN
Associated Press
PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti

(AP) — A late December presidential runoff in Haiti is expected to be held as scheduled regardless of the deep suspicion of first-round results here and abroad, the executive director of the country's electoral body said Monday. Mosler Georges of the much-criticized Provisional Electoral Council told reporters that "everything is ready" from a technical perspective for the scheduled Dec. 27 runoff between leading candidate Jovenel Moise and No. 2 finisher Jude Celestin. He said the ballots have been prepared by a company in Dubai and all election workers will be paid the balance of their wages this week for staffing voting centers during the Oct. 25 first round.

"We have been making all the preparations to follow the election calendar," Georges said at the headquarters of the Provisional Electoral Council, known as the CEP.

Yet political analysts and opposition figures question whether runoff elections can feasibly take place on Dec. 27, especially when one of two presidential candidates in the runoff is alleging rampant fraud and the official results for



Demonstrators march in the street during a protest against the country's electoral council in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Disputed election results have brought a renewed surge of paralyzing street protests and many broad accusations of electoral fraud from civil society and opposition groups.

(AP Photo/Dieu Nalio Chery)

legislative races remain overdue with less than two weeks until the scheduled vote.

Independent observers, Haitian rights groups, the religious lobby and nearly every political faction except the one led by outgoing President Michel Martelly suspect fraud and manipulation in the Oct. 25 balloting and vote-counting.

"It is technically impossible to hold the runoff Dec. 27. Politically, it's unthinkable," said Sauveur Pierre Etienne, one of eight presidential candidates who formed an opposition alliance

with Celestin after preliminary results were issued last month and immediately contested due to allegations of ballot-box tampering and multiple voting.

In their final results, the Provisional Electoral Council said Moise had nearly 33 percent of the vote compared to 25 percent for Celestin, a former state construction chief who was the government-backed candidate five years ago. Celestin has dismissed the final results as a "ridiculous farce" and alleged that the CEP was complicit in vote-rigging in favor of Moise, an

agricultural entrepreneur who was plucked from political obscurity to be the government-backed candidate.

On Monday, the CEP executive director described himself as merely a "technician" and said any possible changes to the electoral timetable would have to be announced directly by the body's nine counselors. None of them attended the Monday press conference, but Georges suggested they had the option of four Sundays in January to hold the runoff if they choose to postpone it. □

At least 43 police die in bus crash in north Argentina

PETER PRENGAMAN
Associated Press
BUENOS AIRES, Argentina

(AP) — At least 43 police officers were killed Monday when a bus in a convoy in northern Argentina blew a tire and veered off the side of a bridge, falling at about 65 feet (20 meters) in an accident that brought the sad state of the South American nation's roads into focus. The bus was one of three carrying police near Salta, a city about 932 miles (1,500 kilometers) north of Buenos Aires.

The National Gendarmerie officers, a special police force typically charged with patrolling frontier regions, were on their way to Jujuy, a region in northern Argentina that borders Bolivia.

Security Minister Patricia Bullrich, who toured the scene, told reporters that an initial investigation found that the right tire of the bus ruptured.

"This is a tragedy. We are going to work to make sure gendarmes are better equipped," Bullrich said. Local television images showed rescue crews working around the overturned bus, which authorities said was carrying around 60 people.

Gustavo Diaz, head of a group of volunteer firefighters in the area, told Argentine state agency Telam that 20 police were injured and were being treated in area hospitals. Authorities also warned the death toll could rise.

Roads in Argentina, a large country with a land mass about four times the U.S. state of Texas, are poorly maintained in many rural areas. □

Miserly Mexican minimum wage sparks calls for change

MEXICO CITY (AP) — This year's miserly increase to Mexico's minimum wage of about 50 cents per hour sparked calls Monday for changing the way salary levels are set.

Politicians from the left and right blasted the increase of about 3 pesos (17 cents) per day, which is equiva-

lent to about 4 percent of the \$4.20 daily minimum wage.

The government argued that was well above the expected inflation rate for the coming year. But critics charged the raise, over a week's time, would barely buy one taco.

With the increase, the daily

minimum wage of about 73 pesos per day is about enough to buy one Big Mac combo with fries and a drink.

The head of the leftist Democratic Revolution Party, Agustin Basave, called for the elimination of the quasi-government board that sets the wage. Basave said

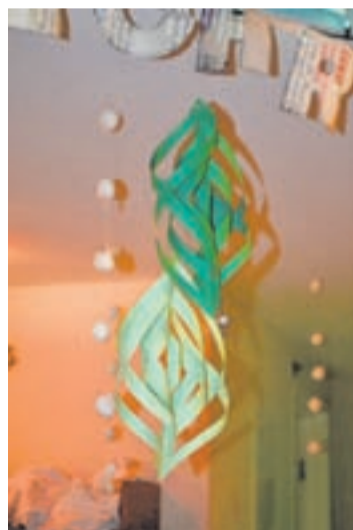
the raise was "meager and insignificant."

Conservative National Action party legislator Arlette Munoz said the raise was "way short" of what Mexican families need.

About 6.9 million of Mexico's 50.7 million-strong workforce earn the minimum wage. □

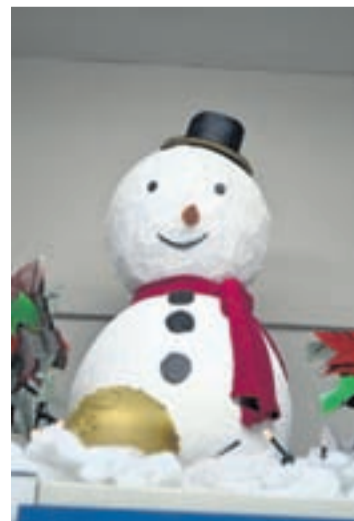


Holiday Team Building at the Divi Phoenix Beach Resort



PALM BEACH –The Divi Phoenix Beach Resort held a unique team-building activity this year in the spirit of the season. Each department at the resort was challenged to decorate their headquarters for the holidays, but with a twist – the decorations had to be made from 100% recycled and repurposed materials. General Manager Gerrit Griffith, together with his department-heads spear-headed the idea, and the different departments ran with it and created some serious holiday magic.

Continued on Page 14



Divi Phoenix

Continued from Page 13



The departments that participated were food & beverage, housekeeping, front office, engineering, landscaping, and sales. The team building activity was a total success,

and produced six incredibly well-decorated departments, each one as creative, cozy and festive as the next. Exploring the magical results produced by the different depart-



ments, it takes a few moments to realize that all of the beautiful decorations are made from 100% recycled and repurposed

materials! Congratulations to each department for their weeks of hard work and dedication to the competition! □



Support Animal Rights Aruba's "We Need a Shelter" Campaign

ORANJESTAD - As you may already know, the main goal of Animal Rights Aruba (ARA) for the year 2015 is to build our own (dog/cat) no-kill shelter. Currently, whenever stray dogs or cats are identified, we have to immediately try to find them foster homes. We do this primarily through social media postings, e-mails or by calling our regular fosters we believe might be able to take them in. ARA has already received a piece of land from the Government of Aruba and the building plans and estimation of the total costs

to build the shelter are finalized. Now we need the financial support of the community and commercial sector. This sub-project is named "Plot(s) for sale". ARA has divided the shelter terrain in "plots" (m2) and these plots are "for sale" for Afl. 250,= per plot. This is a form of donation that will help ARA collect the funds needed for the so much needed shelter. In order to give thanks to the company or individual, once you "buy a plot ARA will, expose your logo or name (with your permission) on



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nations are tax deductible! ARA trust that the community and the commercial

sector will support ARA in making this much needed shelter a reality! Be part of the "We Need A Shelter" campaign! Buy your plot right now by making a donation at Animal Rights Aruba - KvK nr. S904. --Bank account number: 30627674 - RBC Royal Bank (Aruba) N.V. --Bank account number: NL42ABNA0973930632 - ABN AMRO (The Netherlands) --Thru PayPal from our website: www.animalright-saruba.com, --or send us a check. Reference: "plot(s)". □

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Smooth Sailing at the Second Cruise Symposium Aruba



PALM BEACH - The second Cruise Symposium Aruba took place at the Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino recently, in which Federico Gonzalez-Denton, vice president of Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd., was keynote speaker. Mr. Gonzalez-Denton is in charge of government and community re-

lations for Latin America and the Caribbean. He focused his presentation on the cruise experience, including product, service, activities and attractions, and how to attract and maintain client interest. The symposium was an opportunity for ATA to share information with its partners and receive in-

formation with local and international partners involved in this segment of tourism. Cruise tourism is preparing for a busy high season with a projected increase of 20,000 tourists in the upcoming months. Aruba is poised to receive about 700,000 tourists in 2016 and a total of 350 calls. □

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Leicester Stuns Stumbling Chelsea 2-1, Top of Premier League

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Back On Top

New England Patriots tight end Rob Gronkowski (87) catches a pass for a touchdown over Houston Texans strong safety Quintin Demps (27) during the first half of an NFL football game Sunday, Dec. 13, 2015, in Houston.

(AP Photo/George Bridges)

Patriots Clinch Playoff Spot With 27-6 Win Over Texans

KRISTIE RIEKEN
Associated Press
HOUSTON - (AP) New England coach Bill Belichick downplayed the return of Rob Gronkowski on Sunday night since he'd only been out for one game. Tom Brady was far more effusive in his delight at having his tight end back. Brady threw for 226 yards and two touchdowns and

the Patriots snapped a two-game skid and clinched a playoff spot with a 27-6 win over the Houston Texans. "He's a huge influence on what we do offensively," Brady said. "He really toughed it out so I'm proud of him. He had a big touchdown catch. He's obviously a big part of what we do so it was great

to have him out there. ... Football is always trust and anticipation and there's nobody that I trust more than Gronk." The Patriots (11-2) moved ahead of the Denver Broncos and the Cincinnati Bengals in the race for the top AFC playoff seed and can clinch the AFC East with one win, or with one loss or tie by the New York

Jets. New England hasn't lost three straight games since 2002. Brady threw TD passes to Keshawn Martin and Gronkowski in the first half to help New England build a 17-6 lead. Gronkowski had four receptions for 87 yards and a touchdown in his return after missing last week's game with a knee injury.

"It's always good to make a play, get a touchdown," Gronkowski said. "The icing on the cake is that win." The Patriots didn't move the ball as well in the second half, but the defense harassed Brian Hoyer into multiple mistakes. Jabaal Sheard had strip sacks on Hoyer twice after halftime.

Continued on Page 18



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NFL Roundup:

Panthers extend perfect record; clinch first-round bye

CHARLOTTE, North Carolina (AP) — Carolina clinched a first-round bye in the NFC playoffs and remained on track for an unbeaten season by defeating Atlanta 38-0 on Sunday, with quarterback Cam Newton burnishing his MVP credentials by completing 15 of 21 passes for 265 yards and three touchdowns.

The Panthers improved to 13-0 and, counting last season, have now won 17 straight regular-season games.

In other key results, Pittsburgh won at Cincinnati to cut the Bengals' lead in the AFC North division to two games with three to play, New England sealed a playoff spot with victory at Houston, and Denver blew a 12-point lead to lose against Oakland.

Carolina's Newton connected on scoring strikes of 74 and 46 yards to Ted Ginn Jr., and Jonathan Stewart ran for a touchdown as the Panthers scored on their first three possessions.

Newton also threw a 4-yard TD pass to Ed Dickson in the final seconds of the first half before leaving for good at the end of the third quarter with Carolina up 38. He finished with a career-high quarterback rating of 153.3.

Carolina's defense forced four turnovers and had five sacks against a struggling Falcons outfit which has slipped from a 6-1 win-loss record to 6-7.

Cincinnati lost 33-20 to nearest division rival Pittsburgh and also saw quarterback Andy Dalton suffer a broken right thumb that could sideline him for weeks.

The Steelers rumbled with the Bengals during pre-

game warm-ups and then led the whole game, sending Cincinnati to its first lop-

side loss of the season. The game — and potentially Cincinnati's season — turned on one interception. Stephon Truitt picked off Dalton's shovel pass in the first quarter, and the quarterback broke his thumb while making the tackle.

Backup Bengals quarterback A.J. McCarron had one of his passes intercepted for a touchdown by William Gay.



Carolina Panthers' Jonathan Stewart (28) runs past Atlanta Falcons players in the first half of an NFL football game in Charlotte, N.C., Sunday, Dec. 13, 2015.

(AP Photo/Mike McCarn)

Pittsburgh has scored 30 points in five straight games; a franchise record.

Oakland's Khalil Mack had five sacks of Brock Osweiler, including one in the end zone for a safety, as the Raiders overran Buffalo for a 15-12 victory.

The Broncos failed to hold onto a 12-0 halftime lead or several on-target throws from Osweiler, including two big drops by Demary-

ius Thomas, one that would have delivered a touch-down and another for a

late first down. The mistake that really stung was a drop by a wide-open Vernon Davis at the Oakland 42-yard line on fourth-and-5 with 3:45 left.

Oakland quarterback Derek Carr threw two touchdown passes as the Raiders recovered from a woeful first half when they were held to minus-12 yards; the worst first-half performance by any team in nearly a quarter-century.

The New York Jets won a third successive game for the first time in four years by beating Tennessee 30-8, thanks to three touchdown passes by Ryan Fitzpatrick. Green Bay moved a game clear atop the NFC North by beating Dallas 28-7. Eddie Lacy ran for 124 yards and a touchdown, while fellow running back James

Starks added two scores for the Packers, who had 435 offensive yards and 29 first

downs after coach Mike McCarthy assumed play-calling duties again. The Cowboys dropped to 4-9 but are within two games of the top of the mediocre NFC East.

Seattle moved into position for an NFC wild card by winning 35-6 at an injury-depleted Baltimore.

Seahawks quarterback Russell Wilson threw five touchdown passes, three to Doug Baldwin. Wilson went 23 for 32 for 292 yards. The five TD throws matched a career high and gave him 16 over his past four games.

Baldwin scored on passes of 14, 22 and 16 yards. Tyler Lockett caught TD throws of 8 and 49 yards. Philadelphia remained in a tie for the top of the NFC East by defeating Buffalo 23-20. □

Patriots

Continued from Page 17

The Patriots recovered the second one early in the fourth, and James White made it 27-6 with a 2-yard run three plays later.

"I thought we had a lot of guys step up," Belichick said.

"That's what we need. Everybody needs to contribute."

Hoyer was sacked five times and left the game to be evaluated for a concussion with about 9 minutes remaining.

The quarterback already missed a game this season after getting a concussion on Nov. 16. Coach Bill O'Brien said he didn't have more details on Hoyer's injury, but that it looked like he had a concussion.

Hoyer was 11 of 22 for 155 yards. The Texans (6-7) recovered a fumble and forced two punts by the Patriots in the third quarter, but weren't able to take advantage of any of those opportunities and entered the fourth quarter trailing 20-6. Houston remains tied for first place in the AFC South with the Colts, who the Texans face next week.

J.J. Watt played despite breaking his left hand in practice on Wednesday. He wore a cast that enclosed his fingers in a club-like ball.

"It poses some problems, but it wasn't that bad," Watt said. "There were times where it was painful, but that's football, you know? People play with pain all the time." The Texans won two challenges on plays that were called receptions on New England's first drive of the second half, forcing the Patriots to kick a 49-yard field goal to make it 20-6. □

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NBA Roundup:

Wade leads late rally, Heat beat Grizzlies 100-97



Miami Heat guard Dwyane Wade (3) passes around Memphis Grizzlies forward Zach Randolph, right, during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Sunday, Dec. 13, 2015, in Miami. The Heat defeated the Grizzlies 100-97. (AP Photo/Wilfredo Lee)

MIAMI (AP) — Dwyane Wade's jumper with 21.9 seconds left gave Miami its first and only lead of the second half and the Heat rallied from 16 points down

to beat the Memphis Grizzlies 100-97 and end a three-game slide on Sunday night.

Chris Bosh scored 22 points, Gerald Green added 16 and Luol Deng scored 15 for Miami. Wade's jumper put the Heat up one, and Justise Winslow closed it out with two free throws in the final second. Wade finished with 14 points.

Jeff Green scored a season-high 26 points for Memphis, while surprise starter Matt Barnes finished with 13 points and 13 rebounds. Former Heat guard Mario Chalmers had 12 for Memphis, which was outscored 11-0 in the final 2:34.

THUNDER 104, JAZZ 98, OT OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Kevin Durant scored 31 points — all but two after halftime — and Oklahoma City rallied from a 16-point deficit for a second win over Utah in a three-day span.

Russell Westbrook added 25 points, 11 rebounds and five assists for the Thunder, who have won

nine straight home games against Utah dating to the 2010-11 season. Oklahoma City extended its longest winning streak of the season to five games.

Rodney Hood had 23 points, Gordon Hayward scored 22 and Alec Burks added 21 for the Jazz, who fell five games behind first-place Oklahoma City in the Northwest Division.

Westbrook scored two baskets in the first 36 seconds of overtime to give the Thunder the lead, and Utah missed its first nine field-goal attempts in the extra period. The Jazz avoided an OT shutout on Hayward's basket with 8.6 seconds left.

RAPTORS 96, 76ERS 76

TORONTO (AP) — DeMar DeRozan had 25 points, Luis Scola added 22 and Toronto beat Philadelphia for its fourth straight win. DeRozan came into the night averaging 21.7 points per game, and this was his third straight outing with at least 20 points. Scola matched his season-high point total from a

game in November. Toronto started slowly, trailing 16-8 at the midpoint of the first quarter. But the Raptors then took charge to hand the 76ers their sixth straight loss.

Jahlil Okafor led Philadelphia with 23 points and 14 rebounds while Robert Covington added 15 points and nine rebounds.

SUNS 108, TIMBERWOLVES 101

PHOENIX (AP) — Brandon Knight rebounded from a one-point outing in his last game to make seven 3-pointers and score 25 points, helping Phoenix beat Minnesota.

Knight scored nine of his points in the fourth quarter, all on 3s.

The Timberwolves committed 24 turnovers, including nine in the third quarter, which helped the Suns get out in transition and take control of the game for good. Phoenix scored 43 points off turnovers for the game.

Zach LaVine led the Wolves with 28 points and Kevin Martin added 19. □

NHL Roundup: Kane's streak at 26, 'Hawks beat Canucks

CHICAGO (AP) — Chicago's Patrick Kane extended his points streak to 26 games as the Blackhawks beat the Vancouver Canucks 4-0 on Sunday to move into a share of second place in the NHL Central Division.

Kane, the NHL's leading scorer with 46 points, had the second assist on Duncan Keith's power-play goal midway through the first.

He surpassed Sidney Crosby's 25-game streak, set in 2010-11, for the longest in the league since 1992-93.

The Blackhawks right wing has 16 goals and 24 assists during his run, and a point in 29 of Chicago's 31 games.

Corey Crawford made 30 saves while Dennis Rasmussen, Andrew Shaw and Brandon Mashinter also scored for the Blackhawks, who are level on points with St. Louis, eight points behind Central leader Dallas.

Ryan Miller had 26 saves for the Canucks.

ISLANDERS 4, DEVILS 0 NEW YORK (AP) — Marek

Zidlicky scored twice and Thomas Greiss made 27 saves for his first shutout of the season to help the Islanders extend their streak without a regulation loss to 10 games.

John Tavares and Matt Martin also scored for the Islanders, who are on an 8-0-2 stretch and moved into second place in the Metropolitan Division — one point ahead of the crosstown-rival Rangers. The Islanders trailed the Rangers by 11 points entering play on Nov. 25.

The Islanders also improved

to 11-4-2 at home in their first season at Brooklyn's Barclays Center.

Cory Schneider gave up three goals on 18 shots before he was replaced by Keith Kincaid after Martin's goals 7 1/2 minutes into the second period. Kincaid finished with 11 saves.

The Devils were again without Travis Zajac (upper body injury) and Adam Henrique (lower body).

AVALANCHE 3, BLUES 1

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Jack Skille and John Mitchell scored in the first period and Semyon

Varlamov made a season-high 42 saves to lead Colorado to victory at St. Louis, Carl Soderberg added an empty-net goal with 22 seconds remaining to seal the victory.

Varlamov stopped the first 36 shots until Vladimir Tarasenko spoiled his shutout bid with a power-play goal with 7:05 remaining. It was Tarasenko's team-high 18th of the season.

Jake Allen, who had 26 saves in a 3-0 shutout against Dallas on Saturday, stopped 15 saves against Colorado. □



This photo provided by Sports Illustrated shows the cover of the 2015 "Sports Person of the Year" magazine issue, featuring tennis player Serena Williams. Williams is the first female athlete honored on her own as "Sports Person of the Year" by the magazine in more than 30 years.

(Yu Tsai for Sports Illustrated via AP)

Serena Williams is honored as Sports Illustrated's Sportsperson of the Year

NEW YORK (AP) — Serena Williams is Sports Illustrated's Sportsperson of the Year — the first female athlete honored on her own by the magazine in more than 30 years.

Williams came within two matches of tennis' first calendar-year Grand Slam since 1988, a bid that ended with a semifinal loss at the U.S. Open.

In all, the 34-year-old American went 53-3 during 2015 with five titles, including at the Australian Open, French Open and Wimbledon.

Williams was No. 1 in the WTA rankings all season.

"She was the most deserving person for the award. She had an amazing year. The way she won her events; the fact that she's done this for so many years at such a high level," said

Paul Fichtenbaum, editor of the Sports Illustrated Group.

"She was a terrific candidate in a year of terrific candidates."

The cover photo of Williams — in high heels, sitting on a throne — was "her idea, intended ... to express her own ideal of femininity, strength, power," managing editor Christian Stone wrote on SI.com.

Monday's announcement marks a switch to the formal name of the SI award; past recipients were touted as Sportsman or Sportswoman of the Year.

"We just felt this was a natural evolution. ... We're not making a huge deal out of it," Fichtenbaum said. "It just feels like the right time to make the change."

Runner Mary Decker in 1983 was the last female athlete

to earn the magazine's award by herself.

The U.S. women's national soccer team was picked by SI in 1999; speedskater Bonnie Blair in 1994 and gymnast Mary Lou Retton in 1984 were co-honorees with male Olympians.

In 2011, Tennessee women's basketball coach Pat Summitt shared the award with Duke men's coach Mike Krzyzewski.

"Men's sports has dominated until recently, when women's sports has grown in popularity, and the competition is better than ever," Fichtenbaum said.

"There's more of a focus on women's sports now. It's grown considerably. Specifically why? I'm not sure." Other tennis players honored by SI were Arthur Ashe in 1992, Chris Evert in 1976, Billie Jean King in 1972.

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Man United's aura fades with setbacks, brand risks damage

ROB HARRIS
AP Sports Writer

LONDON (AP) — Manchester United is increasingly being viewed as a successful commercial machine with a football club tagged on. It's not only injured club captain Wayne Rooney who is fading as a force, the whole club is losing its aura too.

The fear within the United boardroom will be if the lucrative global brand erodes as a result of the football produced by Louis van Gaal's team which is currently unappealing to the Premier League's worldwide audience.

It might not be Van Gaal's team for much longer if the level of discontent in the stands at Old Trafford remains so vocal. The 64-year-old Dutchman is doing little to offer a glimmer of hope with downbeat public comments that are being increasingly ridiculed by supporters, who are allowed to air grievances on the in-house television channel.

"I want to manage the expectation," said the manager of a club which became so accustomed to glory under Alex Ferguson, when accepting anything but the best was off the agenda. "It is not as easy as everybody thinks."

For the record 20-time champion of English football, this was far from the bravado displayed by United when they are flogging the club to Wall Street investors or any company willing to pay millions of pounds to cover their products with Red Devils branding.

The logo was once a hallmark of success but United has already stuttered through two seasons without a trophy in the post-Ferguson era: First under David Moyes and subsequently Van Gaal.

United appears to have lost the air of supremacy regained during Ferguson's 26-year reign.

Who fears United now? Not even Bournemouth, the newest member of the elite.

A first-ever league match against the southern seaside club ended with United being embarrassed 2-1 on Saturday. This was an opponent that was playing in the fourth tier only seven years ago and docked 17 points for its financial mess.

It wasn't even a case of plucky Bournemouth snatching a freak victory. The Cherries deserved all three points. A draw would have flattered United.

"Who scores the winning goal shall win," a defiant Van Gaal said after the latest loss when injuries were blamed for losing to a team with perhaps the most debilitating collection of sidelined players in the top flight.

The world's second wealthiest team should never have been in a position where it had to give both full backs their full Premier League debuts in the match. As \$3 billion United has struggled for goals the strikers discarded by Van Gaal have been showing just how lethal they can be: Summer sale Javier Hernandez has 15 in 12 games for Bayer Leverkusen and James Wilson has scored twice in his three games since joining Brighton on loan. □



This artist rendering provided by the Japan Sports Council Monday, Dec. 14, 2015 shows the inside of Design "A" proposed by one of two groups competing to build the new Tokyo Olympic stadium. The Japan Sports Council released the designs on Monday and said the winner will be chosen this month. (The Japan Sports Council via AP)

Japan Olympic stadium designs previewed

E. KURTENBACH
Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Two groups competing for the lucrative contract to build the new stadium for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics have disclosed their design proposals.

The Japan Sports Council released the designs on Monday and said the winner will be chosen this month. It did not identify which companies have proposed which designs. The two designs are more understated than the original plan by British-Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid, which was scrapped due to controversy over its cost and scale.

"We will work to ensure a stadium that will be loved by all," Kazumi Daito, president of the Sports Council, said in announcing the plans, which he said would put "athletes first" and also emphasize accessibility for the disabled, elderly and children.

Work on the 158 billion yen (\$1.3 billion) stadium intended to accommodate up to 80,000 people was delayed by the difficulties over its design, which proved a major embarrassment for local Olympics organizers.

Design "A" has a relatively flat roof and fits in with surrounding green-

ery, with shrubbery along its outer concourses. The combined steel and wood structure seems to echo traditional temple designs, and stands only 50 meters (164 feet) tall, with a center sports ground sunk below the surface.

Its construction cost is listed at a total of 153 billion yen (\$1.26 billion). The 54.3-meter-tall (178 feet) Design "B" is more ethereal, with outer glass walls that blend with the sky and are meant to reflect the traditional Asian concepts of the Five Elements of wood, fire, earth, metal and water. It would cost 153.7 billion yen (\$1.26 billion). □

Group opposes blanket ban on all Russians

MONACO (AP) — The global association of Olympic athletes says it's unfair that all Russia's track and field athletes have been banned from international competition because of allegations of state-sponsored doping.

The World Olympians Association calls for an "urgent solution" that allows athletes who have not been involved in doping to be

able to compete.

The WOA issued a statement Monday saying clean athletes should "have their rights and their reputations protected and honored." Russia's athletics federation was suspended by the IAAF following a report by a World Anti-Doping Agency panel that detailed widespread doping. The sanction could keep Russian track and field athletes out

of next year's Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

The WOA suggests that athletes from suspended countries who have clean doping records could undergo "extraordinary testing sessions" clearing them to compete. The WOA has ties to Russia through its patron, Prince Albert of Monaco, who has vacationed in the past with Russian President Vladimir Putin. □

Barcelona to play Arsenal again in Champions League

GRAHAM DUNBAR
AP Sports Writer

NYON, Switzerland (AP) — The Champions League draw produced some familiar pairings Monday with defending champion Barcelona facing Arsenal and Paris Saint-Germain again taking on Chelsea. Barcelona eliminated Arsenal in the 2010 quarterfinals and in the round of 16 in 2011, and beat the English club in the 2006 final. Arsenal will host the five-time champions on Feb.

23 after advancing to the knockout round for the 16th straight season. The Gunners will be hoping to end a five-year losing streak at the round-of-16 stage. French champion PSG and Chelsea will be meeting for the third consecutive season in the knockout phase. Chelsea won in the quarterfinals in 2014 but PSG advanced from the round of 16 last season. PSG, which set a competition record conceding only one goal in its group, could

be the favorite against Chelsea for the first time. "This is the third year we play against Chelsea so it has become some kind of a 'clasico' for us," PSG president Nasser Al-Khelaifi said. "We will be ready." Also, five-time champion Bayern Munich will play away first against 2015 runner-up Juventus, while record 10-time champion Real Madrid will face Roma. Bayern beat the Italian champion Juventus in the

quarterfinals when it last won the trophy three seasons ago. "We might have hoped to be luckier in this draw but I like our team in Europe so far," Juventus vice president Pavel Nedved said. Still, there was one fresh look in the eight pairings as the two newcomers to the knockout rounds were drawn together: Gent will host Wolfsburg first in Belgium. "It appears doable, without taking the rival lightly," Wolfsburg man-

aging director Klaus Allofs said. Also, it was: PSV Eindhoven vs. Atletico Madrid; Dynamo Kiev vs. Manchester City; and Benfica vs. Zenit St. Petersburg. City's first leg in Kiev will be played in an empty stadium because Dynamo has been sanctioned by UEFA for racist incidents involving fans. The first legs will be played on Feb. 16-17 and 23-24, with the second legs scheduled for March 8-9 and 15-16. □

Leicester stuns stumbling Chelsea 2-1, top of Premier League



Chelsea's Diego Costa, left, is tackled by Leicester's Robert Huth during the English Premier League soccer match between Leicester City and Chelsea at the King Power Stadium in Leicester, England, Monday, Dec. 14, 2015.

(AP Photo/Rui Vieira)

LEICESTER, England (AP) — English football's most lethal double act propelled Leicester to a 2-1 win over stumbling champion Chelsea in the Premier League

on Monday, with goals by Jamie Vardy and Riyad Mahrez keeping their team top of the standings. The most remarkable Premier League story in years

shows no sign of ending. After only narrowly avoiding relegation last campaign, Leicester leads the heavyweights of England by two points nearly half-

way through this season. "It's magical," said Leicester manager Claudio Ranieri, who used to coach Chelsea. "I don't want to wake up." Vardy, whose record 11-match scoring streak ended last weekend, got back in the goals to put Leicester ahead in the 34th minute. Mahrez set up that goal and scored the second in the 48th with a curling shot after a dazzling piece of skill. Substitute Loic Remy reduced the deficit for Chelsea but late pressure couldn't yield an equalizer for Jose Mourinho's side, which has lost nine of its 16 games and is amazingly just one point from safety. Chelsea romped to the title last season and its decline is as stunning as Leicester's rise. "I feel my work was betrayed," Mourinho said, turning on some of his players before suggesting that the team overachieved last season. "All last season I did a phe-

nominal work and brought them to a level that is not their level." There are now 20 points separating Leicester and Chelsea. And while Chelsea's top-four ambitions look unlikely, Leicester can start thinking realistically about qualifying for the Champions League. Most pundits are still expecting Leicester's unlikely title challenge to falter, but the team could be hanging around for a while on this evidence. The home side was sharper everywhere, more penetrative going forward and comfortable in defense until Chelsea's late rally. In Mahrez and Vardy, Leicester has the most threatening attacking combination around. They've now scored 26 goals between them this season, nine more than the whole Chelsea team. Vardy knew instinctively where to run when Mahrez cut inside off the left flank and quickly sent over a cross. □

Man United heads to Denmark in last 32 of Europa League

NYON, Switzerland (AP) — Dumped out of the Champions League, Manchester United's next European match will be a trip to western Denmark. United was paired with Danish champion Midtjylland on Monday in the round of 32 of the Europa League. Midtjylland, noted for its progressive management, was formed in 1999, mid-

way through the English club's celebrated treble-winning season when it won the second of its three European titles. With United coach Louis van Gaal under increasing scrutiny for his team's results and playing style, Midtjylland at least was a lower-key option than facing a Valencia team now coached by former Old Trafford great Gary Neville.

Valencia, the 2004 UEFA Cup champion, was the first team picked and was paired with Rapid Vienna. Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp also avoided a high-profile reunion, though he will head back to Germany. The English club was drawn to face Augsburg, with the first leg on Feb. 18 and the second leg a week later. Klopp's former club, un-

seeded Borussia Dortmund, was paired with FC Porto. Like United and Porto, two-time defending Europa League champion Sevilla dropped into the second-tier competition after placing third in a Champions League group. Sevilla, which was the first team to take up the Champions League place now awarded to the Europa League champions, will

host Molde in the first leg. In other pairings, it was: Fiorentina vs. Tottenham; Shakhtar Donetsk vs. Schalke; Villarreal vs. Napoli; Saint-Etienne vs. FC Basel; and Fenerbahce vs. Lokomotiv Moscow. The Fenerbahce-Lokomotiv match will be the first competitive meeting between Turkish and Russian clubs amid political tension between the countries. □

Practical Tech:**For worried pet owners, new online help when Fido gets sick****LINDA A. JOHNSON**
AP Business Writer**TRENTON, N.J. (AP)**— When Fido or Fluffy appear ill or behave strangely, pet owners wonder whether to rush to an emergency clinic or wait to see how the animal fares.

But there's a new way to decide whether a pricey, time-consuming trip to a pet ER is warranted, thanks to technology created for humans: telemedicine, which connects doctors with patients via smartphones and tablets, two-way video, email and other methods.

Several companies recently launched smartphone apps and websites offering pet owners live texting or video chats with a licensed veterinarian, online databases covering pet illnesses, behavior and nutrition and other help. They have veterinarians on standby 24/7.

There's a big market for such services. About two-thirds of U.S. households have one or more pets. And the American Pet Products Association estimates pet owners will spend an average of \$786 for veterinary care for their dogs and \$594 for cats this year.

The services' online advice costs anywhere from a few

dollars for a short text conversation to \$40 for a live chat that includes sharing photos or video of the sick pet.

Most have apps for iPhones and Android devices, plus web sites that explain their services, give bios of their vets and have searchable questions and answers from previous consultations. They're easier to search and bring more reliable info than "Dr. Google," the companies say.

Veterinary regulations vary by state, but most prohibit diagnosing and prescribing treatment unless the veterinarian has physically examined the pet previously. So the services offer basic info and advice — though some hope regulations will change, allowing them to do more in the future.

The virtual consultations these services offer may just reassure pet owners — or help save a dying pet.

James O'Connor of Charlestown, Massachusetts, turned to www.kuddly.co in September when his 2-year-old Labrador/beagle mix, Charlie, had persistent diarrhea. It didn't stop after three \$85 visits to his regular veterinarian, who kept selling him prescription dog food to change Charlie's diet.

O'Connor got a \$3 "sec-



James O'Connor and his dog, Charlie, pose for a photo in Arlington, Vt. There's a new way to decide whether a pricey, time-consuming trip to a pet ER is warranted, thanks to technology created for humans: telemedicine, which connects doctors with patients via smartphones, two-way video, email and other methods. In September 2015, O'Connor used telemedicine to help diagnose what was causing Charlie's persistent diarrhea. (Nicole O'Connor/Courtesy of James O'Connor via AP)

ond opinion" via Kuddly's app from a vet specializing in gastrointestinal disorders. The vet said Charlie appeared to have ir-

ritable bowel syndrome and switched Charlie from chicken-based dog food to salmon. Charlie's doing well now.

"This is where I'm going the next time I have a question," O'Connor said of Kuddly, which launched in July and has more than 150 veterinarians. They set their own prices and offer help via email or live chats in its app.

Kimberly Smith of Hubbard, Texas, credits Vet on Demand with saving her 6-year-old Havanese, Betty.

The service, which was launched in June, offers video chats for \$25 apiece or monthly subscriptions for \$14.95 for one pet and \$29.95 for multiple pets. Vetondemand.com, which has nearly 50 vets, keeps consultation information in an electronic record for follow-up chats.

Smith tried it after her dog was stolen from her yard and mysteriously returned, nearly dead, in February. With her vet 75 minutes away, Smith was "desperate."

She did a \$5 video chat via Vet on Demand that allowed its veterinarian to see Betty's condition, including white gums that indicated internal bleeding. The vet instructed her to feed Betty Pedialite through a turkey baster while a relative drove them to their regular vet's hospital. □

Samsung asks US Supreme Court to throw out \$399M judgment**MARK SHERMAN**
Associated Press**WASHINGTON (AP)**— In its patent dispute with Apple, Samsung is asking the Supreme Court to take a digital-age look at an issue it last confronted in the horse-and-buggy era.

South Korea-based Samsung on Monday appealed a \$399 million judgment for illegally copying patented aspects of the look of Apple's iPhone, the latest round in a long-running fight between the two tech-industry giants.

The last time the Supreme Court heard cases on patents covering the appearance of a product instead

of the way it works was in the late 1800s, when the court battles concerned designs of spoon handles, carpets and saddles.

The smartphone is fast becoming as common a possession as those items were in the Victorian age. Nearly two-thirds of Americans own a smartphone, the Pew Research Center said in April, up from about a third just four years earlier. Apple and Samsung are the top two manufacturers of smartphones.

None of the earlier-generation Galaxy and other Samsung phones involved in the lawsuit remains on the market, Samsung said.

The company's appeal raises two issues at the Supreme Court, arguing that the lower-court ruling upholding the judgment "overprotects and overcompensates" Apple's patents.

One question is how juries should value the common features for which Apple holds patents: the flat screen, the rectangular shape with rounded corners, a rim and a screen of icons.

Samsung said the jury in this case had too much freedom to look at the overall appearance of the phones, rather than focus on those three elements.

The other issue at the Supreme Court is whether a court can order Samsung to pay Apple every penny it made from the phones at issue when the disputed features are a tiny part of the product.

The federal appeals court in Washington that hears patent cases ruled for Apple on both counts.

"Samsung is escalating this case because it believes that the way the laws were interpreted is not in line with modern times," Samsung said in a statement that accompanied its Supreme Court appeal.

Apple spokeswoman Rachel Tulley said the case is

about more than patents and money.

"We make these products to delight our customers, not for our competitors to flagrantly copy," Tulley said.

The Supreme Court could decide early next year whether to hear the case, but arguments would not take place before the fall of 2016.

The legal battles between Apple and Samsung have cooled recently, but this case could attract the justices' interest, said Michael Carrier, a professor at Rutgers Law School who has followed the lawsuits closely. □

Late buying burst leaves stocks higher after wobbly day

MARLEY JAY
AP Markets Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — After an indecisive day, stocks turned around in the last minutes of trading Monday and managed to end with modest gains.

Last week the market had its worst drop since mid-August, and for much of the day it looked like the losses would continue. Near mid-day the Standard & Poor's 500 index hit a two-month low. But oil prices recovered from last week's rout and the broader market rose over the last hour of trading, finishing at its highest levels of the day.

The Dow Jones industrial average picked up 103.29 points, or 0.6 percent, to 17,358.50. The S&P 500 index gained 9.57 points, or 0.5 percent, to 2,021.94. Nine of the 10 sectors on the S&P 500 finished higher, though most of the gains were small. The Nasdaq composite index added 18.76 points, or 0.4 percent, to 4,952.23.

Early in the day the price of oil fell below \$35 a barrel for the first time since early 2009. However oil recovered and rose about 2 percent, breaking a streak of six straight losses.

U.S. crude gained 69 cents at \$36.31 a barrel in New York. Brent crude, a benchmark for international oils, fell a penny to \$37.92 a barrel in London.

The gain sent oil companies broadly higher. Exxon Mobil rose \$1.69, or 2.3 percent, to \$76.03 and Chevron added \$2.89, or 3.3 percent, to \$89.33.

Consumer products maker Jarden Brands agreed to be acquired by competitor Newell Rubbermaid.

The cash and stock deal would create a conglomerate that owns brands like Paper Mate, Sharpie, Elmer's, Rubbermaid and Calphalon.

The deal is worth at least

trader, said industrial demand for natural gas in the U.S. and from Canada has tumbled. That means the biggest remaining source of demand is for consumers who use gas to heat

the deal and wants Dow CEO Andrew Liveris removed. Dow's board says it stands by the proposal.

On Friday Dow and DuPont agreed to combine into a \$130 billion company and



Traders Thomas Cicciari, left, and Michael Capolino, center, work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, Monday, Dec. 14, 2015. After an indecisive day, stocks turned around in the last minutes of trading Monday and managed to end with modest gains.

(AP Photo/Richard Drew)

\$13.2 billion, or \$60 per share. Jarden stock added \$1.41, or 2.7 percent, to \$54.09. Newell Rubbermaid shares fell \$3.13, or 6.9 percent, to \$42.15.

Natural gas prices plunged to the lowest level since September 2001 as warm weather continues to erode demand for home heating. The falling price hurt natural gas companies. Range Resources sank 89 cents, or 3.9 percent, to \$21.86 and Southwestern Energy slumped 57 cents, or 9.7 percent, to \$5.33.

Natural gas fell 9.6 cents, or 4.8 percent, to \$1.894 per 1,000 cubic feet.

Stephen Schork, an independent analyst and

their homes. But it's been a very warm winter so far.

"This weather's going to persist through the rest of this month," Schork said. However he said prices will recover if it gets colder in January.

In other energy trading, wholesale gasoline declined 2.6 cents, or 2 percent, to \$1.256 a gallon and heating oil lost 1.8 cents, or 1.6 percent, to \$1.128 a gallon.

Activist investor Daniel Loeb is challenging the combination of chemicals makers DuPont and Dow Chemical, announced on Friday. Loeb, who owns a stake in Dow Chemical, questioned the timing of

then split up into three smaller businesses. Loeb has pushed Dow to split its specialty chemical and petrochemical businesses. Another activist investor, Nelson Peltz, has been pushing DuPont to break itself up.

Dow Chemical lost \$2.08, or 3.9 percent, to \$51.29 and DuPont slid \$2.52, or 3.6 percent, to \$67.92.

Mining companies and industrial materials makers slumped, with Dow and DuPont leading the way. Copper miner Freeport-McMoRan dropped as copper prices continued to slide. Freeport shares skidded 44 cents, or 6.4 percent, to \$6.46. □

STREET BRIEFS

Dow Co.'s board reaffirms support for DuPont deal

NEW YORK (AP) — Dow Chemical Co.'s board reaffirmed its support for the company's merger with DuPont after a news report said activist investor Daniel Loeb wants Dow's CEO to be removed.

The Wall Street Journal said Loeb, who heads Third Point LLC, wrote a private letter to Dow's board questioning the timing of the merger and pushing for Dow CEO Andrew Liveris to be removed. Loeb's firm has a 2 percent stake in Dow, according to FactSet. A Third Point spokeswoman said the report was correct but declined further comment. Dow and DuPont announced a merger Friday that would form a \$130 billion company that would later be split into three separate companies. Dow's board, including two members selected by Third Point, said in a statement Monday that they fully support the deal.

Norfolk Southern rejects Canadian Pacific's bid again

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Norfolk Southern railroad says Canadian Pacific's latest takeover offer is still "grossly inadequate" and unlikely to be approved by federal regulators. The Norfolk, Virginia, railroad sent a letter Monday reiterating its rejection of the revised offer Canadian Pacific delivered last week.

Canadian Pacific officials have said they're ready to take their offer directly to shareholders because Norfolk Southern executives have been unwilling to sit down and negotiate. Norfolk Southern estimates that the latest cash and stock offer would be worth roughly \$27 billion based on Canadian Pacific's stock price. Canadian Pacific says the offer is worth somewhere between \$37 billion and \$42 billion because its estimate is based on the projected value of stock in a new company that would own both railroads. □

Indian group Mahindra takes over Pininfarina

MILAN (AP) — The Mahindra industrial group based in Mumbai, India, announced Monday it had reached a deal to buy a controlling stake in the Italian design firm Pininfarina, most famous for its designs for Ferrari, Alfa Romeo and Maserati. Shares in the 85-year-old Italian company dropped by nearly

70 percent on the news, to close at 1.31 euros. That compares with 4.20 euros last Friday. Under the deal, two of the Mahindra group's units, Tech Mahindra and Mahindra & Mahindra, will buy 76.06 percent of the design firm from the Pininfarina family's holding company, Pincar, for 1.10 euros a share. The deal

calls for an open offer for the remaining Pininfarina shares held by Pincar to be completed by the end of 2016. Mahindra is to invest 20 million euros to recapitalize Pininfarina, which will remain an independent company listed on the Milan Stock Exchange with Paolo Pininfarina staying on as chairman Mahindra

said in a statement that the acquisition will give it entry to automotive styling while contributing to its transportation, aerospace and industrial design work. The vast Mahindra group is worth \$16.9 billion, employing 200,000 people in 100 countries, with Tech Mahindra representing \$3.9 billion. □

Reports: China tycoon appears at event after disappearance

JOE McDONALD
AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — The chairman of the Chinese conglomerate that owns Club Med and whose company said he was assisting an official investigation after he disappeared for a day last week, appeared Monday at a corporate meeting, two newspapers reported. The government has released no details about Fosun chairman Guo Guangchang and Fosun has yet to say whether he was under investigation or was being questioned about other people.

A 3-year-old anti-corruption crackdown led by President Xi Jinping that has snared dozens of executives at state companies. A series of securities executives have disappeared or been detained since regulators launched an investigation after Chinese share prices plunged in June.

On Monday, Guo spoke at Fosun's previously scheduled annual meeting, according to the newspapers ChinaBusiness News and The Paper.

Both quoted identical comments from him saying Fosun needs to expand globally but gave no indication whether he mentioned the investigation.

Photos on the papers' websites showed Guo, 48, in a gray business suit and open-necked white shirt speaking at a podium and sitting with other executives.

Fosun suspended trading of its shares Friday after a business magazine reported the company was unable to contact Guo. The company issued a statement later that day saying Guo was "currently assisting in certain investigations carried out by mainland judiciary authorities."

Employees who answered the phone Monday at Fosun's headquarters said no one was working in the public relations department. □

Report: Cheniere Energy replacing CEO Charif Souki

HOUSTON (AP) — Two months after activist investor Carl Icahn boosted his stake in Cheniere Energy for the second time in two weeks, the company announced the departure of its co-founder and chief executive.

The company was the first to be granted permission by the U.S. to export gas

and has built massive liquid natural gas export terminals to do so. Those exports are expected to begin any day now.

Icahn first revealed a sizeable stake in Cheniere in August, then two weeks later announced that he had upped that stake to more than 11 percent. The company agreed to seat two of his associates on

the board and on Monday, announced that it was replacing Charif Souki, who helped to found the company and has ambitiously tried to expand the company's reach after the U.S. became a huge producer of natural gas, as well as crude.

Under Souki, Cheniere transformed import facilities, no longer needed, into

export terminals for natural gas.

Icahn, who typically pushes for changes at companies in which makes large investments, has called the Houston company undervalued. Shares of Cheniere Energy Inc. have fallen 24 percent over the past three months, outpaced by declining prices for natural gas. □

Newell Rubbermaid buying Jarden in cash, stock deal

ATLANTA (AP) — Newell Rubbermaid is buying Jarden Corp. in a cash-and-stock deal that it says will generate about \$16 billion in revenue per year with brands such as Paper Mate, Sharpie, Elmer's, Rubbermaid, Lenox, Yankee Candle and Graco.

Jarden shareholders will receive \$21 in cash and 0.862 shares of Newell Rubbermaid stock for each share they own.

The implied total value is \$60 per share worth about \$13.2 billion.

The company says that holders of convertible bonds also qualify for the deal, boosting the price of the overall transaction to about \$15.4 billion.

Newell Rubbermaid shareholders will own about 55 percent of the combined business. It said Monday that it expects annual cost savings of about \$500 million over four years.

The transaction is expected to immediately add to



Jarden Corp. founder & CEO Martin Franklin, left, and Newell Rubbermaid President and CEO Michael Polk are interviewed on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, Monday, Dec. 14, 2015. (AP Photo/Richard Drew)

earnings per share.

Michael Polk, CEO of Atlanta-based Newell Rubbermaid, will serve as CEO of a company that will adopt the name Newell Brands.

Mark Tarchetti, chief development officer at Newell Rubbermaid, will become president.

Three Jarden directors will join the Newell Brands

board. They include Jarden founder and Executive Chairman Martin Franklin and Jarden co-founder, Vice Chairman and President Ian Ashken. □

Ex-billionaire refuses to leave jail for deposition

MATTHEW BROWN
Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — Creditors in the bankruptcy of a Montana resort for the ultra-rich are seeking court sanctions against its founder, a former billionaire, for refusing a jailhouse deposition.

Yellowstone Club founder Tim Blixseth of Medina, Washington, has been in a Montana jail since April. That's when a judge held him in contempt for not disclosing what happened to part of the fortune he ac-

quired after diverting funds from the private ski and golf club near Yellowstone National Park for his personal use.

On Dec. 7, Blixseth refused to come out of his jail cell in Cascade County for a previously scheduled deposition, attorneys for the club's remaining creditors said in court documents. They want a federal judge to force Blixseth to appear for the deposition this week and also repay them more than \$31,000 in legal expenses.

But Blixseth attorney Paul Brain says his client had no obligation to appear for the deposition, which was part of a lawsuit targeting the assets of Blixseth's wife, Jessica.

"These guys simply failed to properly compel Tim's appearance," Brain said. "He had no obligation to appear because he never was served a subpoena for the deposition."

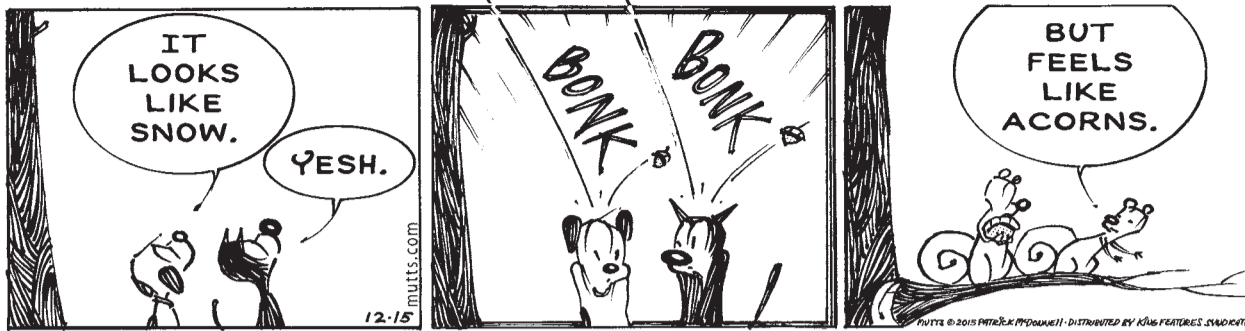
A Monday hearing in the matter was scheduled before U.S. District Judge Richard Jones.

Blixseth gave up control of the Yellowstone Club during his 2008 divorce from ex-wife Edra Blixseth. The resort, with its private ski hill and an exclusive membership that includes Microsoft's Bill Gates, soon spiraled into bankruptcy.

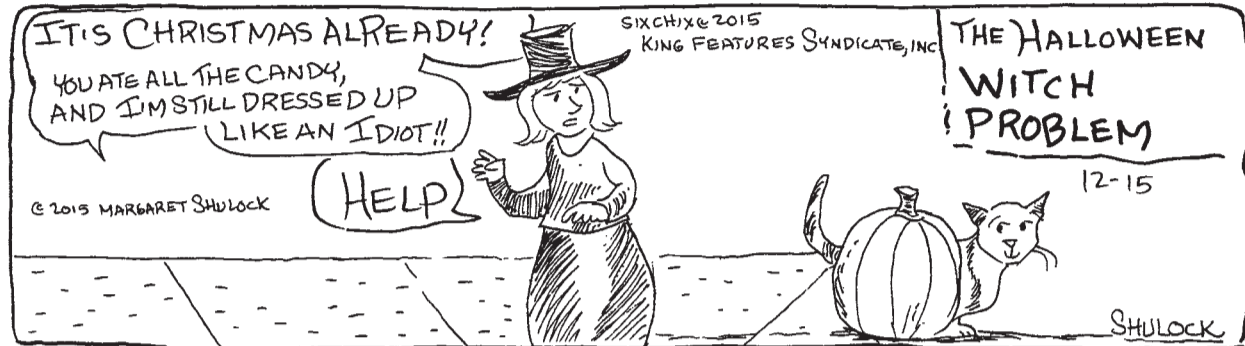
Its creditors say Blixseth owes them more than \$250 million after draining the club's coffers prior to giving up control. The Yellowstone Club later was sold and is under new ownership.

How long Blixseth will remain in jail is uncertain. □

Mutts



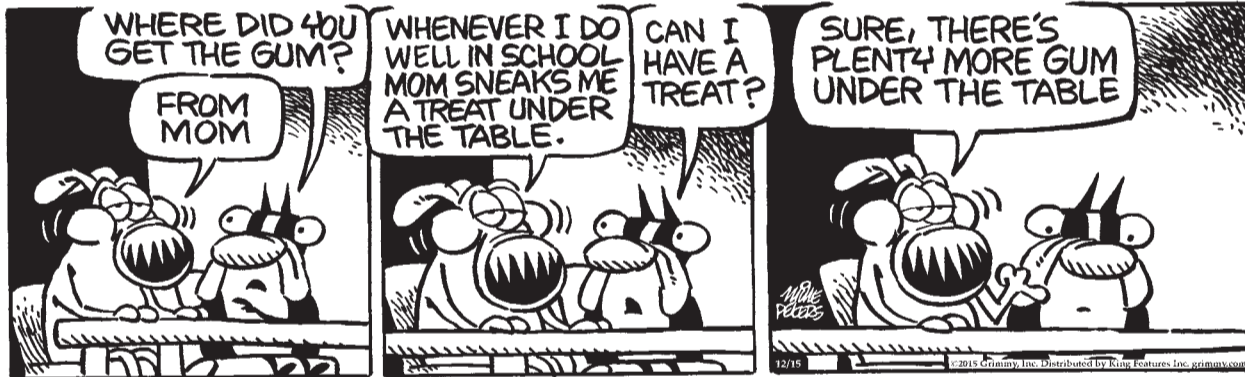
6 Chix



Blondie



Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

		6			5			
	7			6			3	
9			2	7				6
		3	6	4	8			
	2						1	
		7	1	8	9			
1			9	3				8
	8			4			6	
		2				3		

Difficulty Level ★★

12/15

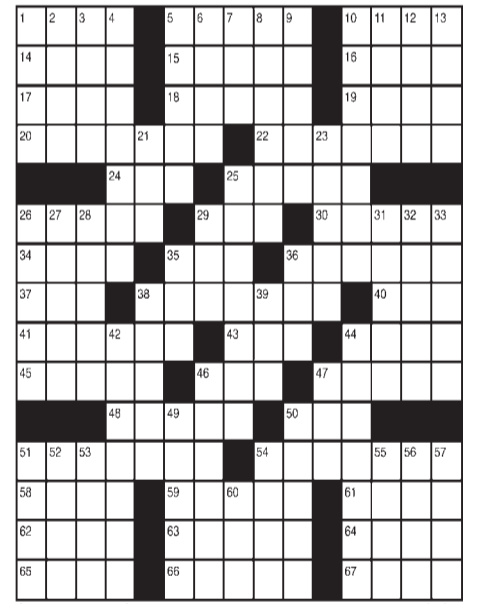
Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

6	2	9	4	3	8	1	5	7
8	5	3	7	6	1	4	9	2
1	7	4	9	2	5	3	6	8
4	8	2	1	7	9	5	3	6
7	9	5	3	8	6	2	1	4
3	1	6	5	4	2	7	8	9
9	6	1	2	5	7	8	4	3
5	3	7	8	9	4	6	2	1
2	4	8	6	1	3	9	7	5

ACROSS

- 1 Up in ___; angry
- 5 Overcook milk
- 10 Split ___; hair problem
- 14 Cowboy's shoe
- 15 Two's follower
- 16 Webster or Wyle
- 17 "Take ___"; casual farewell
- 18 Gathers leaves
- 19 Cast a ballot
- 20 Reeked
- 22 Expanded
- 24 Statute
- 25 Cooking herb
- 26 Remove the lid from
- 29 Trigger's rider
- 30 ___ cords; parts of the larynx
- 34 Hideaway
- 35 Buddy
- 36 Elk
- 37 Rollaway bed
- 38 Skilled craftsman
- 40 "Has Anybody Seen My ___?"
- 41 Come forth
- 43 Actor Diesel
- 44 Sentry's shout
- 45 Staircase piece
- 46 Gent
- 47 Little misses
- 48 Postpone; put off
- 50 Tavern
- 51 Recognize, as the difference
- 54 African nation
- 58 Tiny bit
- 59 Enthusiastic
- 61 Drape puller
- 62 Trade
- 63 Perfume
- 64 Head covering
- 65 Hired vehicles
- 66 Pays attention to
- 67 Hostels
- DOWN**
- 1 Basics
- 2 Wander
- 3 Extra amount
- 4 Outstanding
- 5 Scatter
- 6 Actor Everett
- 7 Noah's boat
- 8 Wiggle room
- 9 Arnaz, Sr., and Arnaz, Jr.
- 10 Enwrap
- 11 Midday
- 12 Desert fruit
- 13 Get rid of
- 21 Distance around a track
- 23 Sofa
- 25 Simón ___; South American hero
- 26 Stomach woe
- 27 Wynonna's ma
- 28 Refers to
- 29 Long-tailed rodent
- 31 Cuban export
- 32 ___ costs; by any means
- 33 Uplifting tunes
- 35 Prefix for view or historic
- 36 Pale
- 38 See eye to eye
- 39 Sermon topic
- 42 Baggage porters
- 44 Small barbecue
- 46 Troublemaker
- 47 Juicy Fruit or Doublemint
- 49 ___ as a daisy
- 50 Harbor towns
- 51 Compact ___; CD
- 52 Dubuque, ___
- 53 Pierce
- 54 Transmit
- 55 Diving bird
- 56 Common metal
- 57 ___ up; tallies
- 60 "Wow!"



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews 12/15/15

Monday's Puzzle Solved

ADLIB	SCAM	TRIM			
NAOMI	CUBA	RACE			
TRAPS	ARCS	ITIS			
INDECENT	STAINS				
	DUES	GEOLOGY			
COHEIR	LOSER				
AVE	TIMER	DUETS			
GERM	EAGER	NAIL			
ERROR	RADIO	DNA			
	NOBEL	SUNSET			
MANUALS	FETE				
ALUMNA	MUSCATEL				
NIKE	SAID	ATONE			
OVEN	TANG	SENDS			
REST	SAGE	TRYST			

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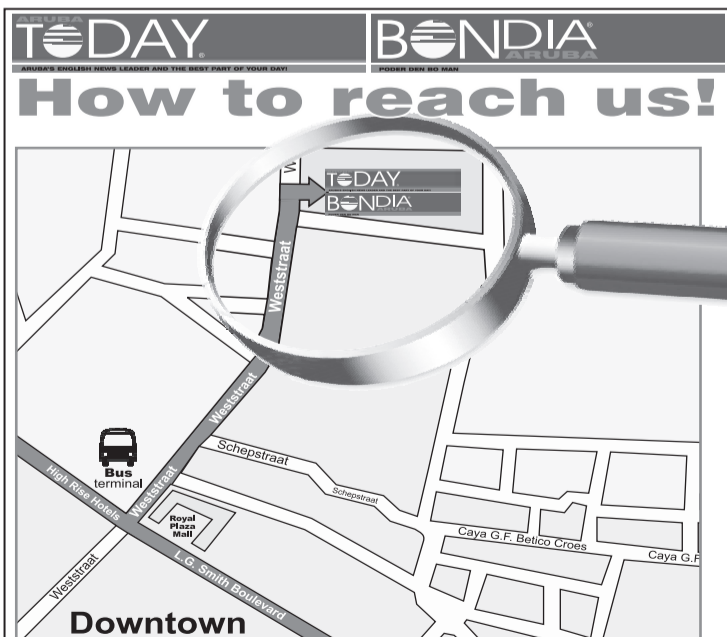
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 e-mail: usmc53w@aol.com

204159

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Dr. Samuels
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TAXI D.T.S.	587-2300
SERVICE ARUBA	583-3232

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Now comes the tough part: The world's carbon diet starts



The sun sets behind a power plant powered by coal in the Bosnian town of Tuzla, 120 kms north of Sarajevo, Bosnia, Saturday, Dec. 12, 2015.

SETH BORENSTEIN
 AP Science Writer

PARIS (AP) — The world is about to go on a carbon diet. It won't be easy — or cheap.

Nearly 200 nations across the world on Saturday approved a first-of-its-kind universal agreement to wean Earth off fossil fuels and slow global warming, patting themselves on the back for showing such resolve.

On Sunday morning, like for many first day dieters, the reality sets in. The numbers — like calorie limits and hours needed in the gym — are daunting.

How daunting? Try more than 7.04 billion tons (if you really want to have your eyes bug out, that's 15.5 trillion pounds). That's how much carbon dioxide needs to stay in the ground instead of being spewed into the atmosphere for those reductions to happen, even if you take the easier of two goals mentioned in Saturday's deal. To get to the harder goal, it's even larger numbers.

In the pact, the countries pledged to limit global warming to about another degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) from now — and if they can, only half that.

Another, more vague, goal is that by sometime in the second half of the century, man-made greenhouse gas emissions — which includes methane and other heat-trapping gases as well as carbon dioxide — won't exceed the amount that nature absorbs. Earth's carbon cycle, which is complex and ever-changing, would have to get back to balance.

In practice, that means the world has to emit close to zero greenhouse gases by 2070 to reach the easier goal, or by 2050 to reach the harder one, said John Schellnhuber, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany.

Oh and by the way, the harder goal — limit warming by another half a degree Celsius (0.9 Fahrenheit)

(AP Photo/Amel Emric)

— is probably already impossible, said Joeri Rogelj at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis in Austria. Most likely the best the world can hope for is overshooting that temperature by a few tenths of a degree and then somehow slowly — over decades if not centuries — come back to the target temperature.

That may involve something called negative emissions. That's when the world — technology and nature combined — take out more carbon dioxide from the air than humanity puts in. Nearly 90 percent of scenarios of how to establish a safer temperature in the world involves going backward on emissions, but it is also so far not very realistic, said Kevin Anderson, deputy director of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research in Britain. Negative emissions involve more forests, maybe seeding the oceans, and possibly technology that sucks carbon out of the air and

stores it underground somehow. More biomass or forests require enormous land areas and direct capture of carbon from air is expensive, but with a serious sustained research effort costs can probably be brought below \$100 per metric ton, said engineering and policy professor Granger Morgan of Carnegie Mellon University.

Leading up to the Paris Agreement, nearly every nation formed an individual action plan to cut or at least slow the growth of carbon pollution over the next decade or so. Richer nations that have already developed, like the United States, Europe and Japan, pledged to cut now. Developing nations that say they need fossil fuels to pull themselves out poverty pledged to slow the rate of growth for now, and to cut later.

"The EU and U.S. are all on Slim-Fast," said Paul Bledsoe, a former Clinton administration climate official. "China's still hitting fast food, but will have to stop soon."

China, the world's top carbon polluter, will eventually have to make the biggest cuts. Overall, for the world to hit its new target, global carbon dioxide emissions will have to peak by 2030, maybe earlier, and then fall to near-zero, experts said. Those levels have been generally rising since the industrial revolution. A new study suggests emissions may have fallen slightly this year, but that may be a blip.

Without any efforts to limit global warming, the world would have warmed by 3.5 degrees Celsius (6.3 degrees Fahrenheit) from now by 2100, according to Climate Interactive. But China's submitted plan alone

would cut that projected warming by 1.3 degrees, according to Climate Interactive. The U.S. plan trims about six tenths of a degree of the projected warming without a global deal.

And while China is now the No. 1 carbon dioxide polluter with more than a quarter of the world's emissions, carbon dioxide stays in the air for at least a century, so historical emissions are important. Since 1870, the U.S. is responsible for 18 percent of the world's carbon pollution, compared to 13 percent for China.

That all sounds good, but the goals the nations have set aren't enough. Taken together, they would still allow temperatures to rise 2.5 degrees Celsius (4.5 degrees Fahrenheit) by the end of the century from now, so to reach the goals agreed on this weekend countries will need to do more, Climate Interactive found.

Another climate modeling group, Climate Action Tracker, is slightly more optimistic, but still finds the nations' plans would miss the goal of limiting temperature rise to one more degree. It says the current proposals would allow a rise of 1.7 degrees Celsius (1.25 degrees Fahrenheit). Countries agreed Saturday to take another look at their goals every five years.

"Clearly countries must be exercising their low-carbon muscles more," said Rachel Cleetus, climate policy manager for the Union of Concern Scientists.

French President Francois Hollande took the first step as he praised the Paris Agreement. He said France would ratchet up its goals and efforts earlier than required and challenged other nations to do the same. □

'Gods of Egypt' renews concern about inaccurate film casting



Gerard Butler attends a film premiere in Toronto. An unusual thing happened in Hollywood recently: Director Alex Proyas and Lionsgate apologized for the lack of racial diversity in "Gods of Egypt," a full three months before the movie is set to hit theaters in 2016. The film, a fantasy epic set in ancient times, stars Scottish actor Butler and Danish actor Nikolaj Coster-Waldau as Egyptian gods Set and Horus.

(Evan Agostini/Invision/AP)

LINDSEY BAHR
AP Film Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — An unusual thing happened in Hollywood on a recent weekend: Director Alex Proyas and Lionsgate apologized for ethnically inaccurate casting in "Gods of Egypt" — a full three months before the movie is set to hit theaters.

The fantasy epic stars Scottish actor Gerard Butler and Danish actor Nikolaj Coster-Waldau as mythological Egyptian gods, and a recently released trailer renewed concern about Hollywood's long tradition of casting against race.

In the jointly issued statements responding to social media criticism, Proyas acknowledged that the choices should have been more diverse and Lionsgate pledged to do better in the future.

While some praised the preemptive mea culpa, including "Selma" director Ava DuVernay and the Casting Society of America, others were more skeptical, concluding that it's simply meant to shut down any further backlash. It's

also a reminder of how it often takes Hollywood years to make a movie, causing some films to lag behind shifting social attitudes when they're finally released.

"The apology is an attempt to have it both ways," said professor Todd Boyd, chair for the Study of Race and Popular Culture at the University of Southern California. "They want the cast that they selected and they don't want people to hold it against them that it's a white cast."

Authenticity in casting has become a major discussion point in recent years, thanks in part to the amplifying effect of the Internet. Petitions spring up as soon as questionable castings are announced. Such was the case with Joe Wright's "Pan," when Rooney Mara was announced as the choice to play the Native American princess Tiger Lily in March of 2014.

But the topic doesn't end with angry tweets and on-line petitions. In his Netflix show "Master of None," Indian-American comedian Aziz Ansari recently called

out the whitewashing of Indian roles in Hollywood films like "The Social Network" and "Short Circuit." While the practice didn't go unnoticed before, now it's becoming more of a liability.

"There was a time when studios thought audiences could handle Mickey Rooney playing I. Y. Yunioshi in 'Breakfast at Tiffany's,'" said Adam Moore, SAG-AFTRA's National Director of Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity. "That's not happening today. No one is going to think that's OK. Things have changed." But there's also an inherent tension between art and authenticity.

"From a performer's perspective, it is not supposed to matter what ethnicity, race, sexual orientation or age you are, it's what you can play. That's what our federal and state laws say," added Moore. "You can't ask someone when you're casting 'Memoirs of a Geisha' if they're Japanese."

Casting is a complex art and each production is different in terms of objectives, who makes the calls, and why specific decisions are made.

Still, public backlash to castings that are seen as inauthentic are almost inevitable now. When the issue has come up over the past few years, filmmakers and actors have either stayed silent, cited financial realities ("Exodus: Gods and Kings"), artistic vision ("Pan") or apologized after the fact ("Aloha").

"Exodus: Gods and King" was a particular tipping point in the conversation. Director Ridley Scott brushed off condemnations at the time, blaming the model of financing Hollywood movies for his choices. He told trade publication Variety that he would not be able to get the film financed by casting "Mohammad so-and-so from such-and-such."

So the filmmakers behind "Gods of Egypt" addressed the whitewashing on their own terms — just as the

marketing campaign was kicking off.

Lionsgate was in a tricky spot with "Gods of Egypt." The "Exodus" controversy seems ages old to the public, but "Gods of Egypt" had its main cast set over a year before "Exodus" hit theaters last December and wrapped shooting long before Scott's choices were being publicly lambasted.

"What I think that people are going to start to see is it's going to become a bad decision, business-wise. It's going to be a gamble to do things like this," said Moore.

"Exodus: Gods and Kings" was critically panned and flopped at the domestic box office, earning only \$65 million on a \$140 million budget. (It earned \$268.2 million worldwide). □

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TV's Big Year:

Letterman, Trump, Jenner among TV's most eye-popping in 2015

FRAZIER MOORE
AP Television Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — It's been a year of shifting sands in late night. A year of broken trust in two vastly different TV personalities. And a year when presidential debates became must-see TV. Here's a rundown of 10 big

season finale — a virtually unprecedented feat — and it launched Taraji P. Henson's fearless, outrageous Cookie as the year's breakout character, complete with a real-life fashion line. Meanwhile, stars from Mariah Carey and Cuba Gooding Jr. to Pitbull and

Trusted NBC "Nightly News" anchor Brian Williams, who reported so credibly on wars for NBC News, got caught fudging his own stories as a guest on "Late Show" and elsewhere. His was a precipitous fall from grace (and the top tier of NBC News) as he was

"Downton Abbey," was winding down for its final season in early 2016.)

'19 KIDS' OUT:

Trouble hit the long-running TLC reality show "19 Kids and Counting" after the oldest of the Duggar brood, 27-year-old Josh,

"Becoming Us" premiered on ABC Family as an unscripted series focusing on an Illinois teen whose father was becoming a woman. July brought "I Am Jazz," a TLC unscripted series about 14-year-old Jazz Jennings, who was born male but at 2 years old knew she was a girl. And also in July, the docuseries "I Am Cait" arrived on the E! network to chart the former Bruce Jenner's transition to Caitlyn Jenner as part of a highly orchestrated coming-out campaign that included an April interview with ABC's Diane Sawyer and a Vanity Fair cover.

HUGER THAN EVER:

Donald Trump has long been a familiar face on TV, especially since 2004, when he debuted as host of NBC's "The Apprentice." That relationship abruptly ended last June, not long after Trump's incendiary remarks about Mexican immigrants made while announcing his GOP presidential candidacy. In his new role, he scored an even better TV gig. He became a sought-after guest on talk shows, newscasts and as host of "Saturday Night Live," and proved to be a ratings magnet for presidential debates (see below). Trump's typically measured self-assessment: "Nobody gets ratings like me."

THAT'S DEBATABLE:

Presidential debates were big draws and big business for the networks that presented them in 2015 — at least, when Donald Trump was involved. The first Republican debate was watched by 24 million viewers, the highest-rated broadcast in Fox News Channel's history. The second debate, with nearly 23 million viewers, made similar history for CNN. The third debate, seen by 14 million viewers, broke records for CNBC. And with the fourth debate, Fox Business Network landed its biggest-ever audience, 13.5 million viewers. □



President Barack Obama and host David Letterman talk during a break at a taping of CBS' *The Late Show with David Letterman* at the Ed Sullivan Theater in New York. In May, David Letterman retired from CBS' "Late Show" and, in September, Colbert arrived as its new host.

(AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais)

television happenings in 2015:

SAY 'GOOD NIGHT':

Late-night TV's transformation began in January, when Larry Wilmore's new "Nightly Show" claimed the Comedy Central slot previously held by Stephen Colbert's "Colbert Report." Then in February, Jon Stewart announced he was leaving Comedy Central's "The Daily Show" and, in July, he did. In March, James Corden took over CBS' "Late Late Show" and Trevor Noah was declared the incoming host of "The Daily Show," debuting in September. In May, David Letterman retired from CBS' "Late Show" and, in September, Colbert arrived as its new host.

RATINGS EMPIRE:

Fox's "Empire" premiered in January and quickly became a rip-roaring success. Its audience grew every week through its May

Marisa Tomei were lining up to guest on the show. All in all, a rare case of a broadcast-network drama truly shaking things up.

STREAMS GLEAM:

Streaming was where the TV action was this year as an increasing number of viewers gleefully cut the cable cord (or at least fantasized about it) while plugging into outlets like Netflix, Amazon Prime and Hulu, which all upped their stake in original content. Newcomers kept viewers' heads spinning, including the Spanish-language Univision Now channel and, now in beta, the comedy channel Seeso. Meanwhile, CBS' All Access streaming-video service grabbed viewers' attention by announcing that early in 2017 it would be the exclusive U.S. home for a brand-new "Star Trek" series.

ANCHOR AWAY:

benched and replaced by Lester Holt. Though he would continue to be banned from NBC, he was eventually deemed sufficiently trustworthy to play on second-string MSNBC, where he quietly emerged from hiding in September.

A COKE, A SMILE:

May marked the end of "Mad Men," a drama that made its network, AMC, golden while helping certify television as the artistic equal of film. After seven seasons plotting the style, agita and misbehavior of the '60s white-collar class, it concluded in properly shrewd fashion: Don Draper (series star Jon Hamm), who had dropped out of the ad game in despair, was struck with his own brand of consciousness-raising while he meditated at a yoga retreat, then returned home armed with a New Age epiphany for a classic Coke commercial. (Another beloved series,

became the subject of revelations that, as a teenager, he had fondled four of his sisters and a baby sitter. A portrait of wholesome family life, "19 Kids" had been TLC's most-watched series, averaging 3.2 million viewers, until it was pulled from the air in May, then officially canceled in July. In August, Josh publicly apologized for a pornography addiction and cheating on his wife, and, in November, he was sued by an adult-film actress who claimed he assaulted her when consensual sex turned rough. None of that kept TLC from producing three specials featuring two of the sisters victimized by Josh for airing in December.

TRANSITIONING:

Gender reassignment was a conspicuous theme in 2015. Amazon's award-winning scripted series "Transparent" entered its second season. In June,

Grown men now love Justin Bieber's music, too



Canadian singer Justin Bieber performs live during a small concert for charity in Toronto. "Sorry" and "What Do You Mean," currently at Nos. 2 and 4 on Billboard's Hot 100 chart, helped Bieber solidify his comeback after years of a broken image, which included arrests, public smoking and fainting onstage that led to hospitalization. (Nathan Denette/The Canadian Press/AP)

MESFIN FEKADU
AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Most grown men love musical acts like the Black Keys and Kendrick Lamar. Now, you can add Justin Bieber's name to that list. With his recent batch of hit

singles and a semi-grown-up sound — including the electro-pop "Where Are U Now" with DJ-producers Skrillex and Diplo — adult men have begun attending the musical church of Bieber, and while some have issues acknowledg-

ing it, others proudly say they're Beliebers. "You can't deny where Justin Bieber is right now musically. You want to not like him, but you kind of just have to respect it," said Timothy Javier, a 30-year-old nurse from Fort Lee,

New Jersey.

Javier said Bieber's new album, "Purpose," reminds him of Justin Timberlake's "Justified," his 2002 solo debut that helped him transition from 'N Sync frontman to a leader of pop music. The singles "Sorry" and "What Do You Mean?" — currently at Nos. 2 and 4 on Billboard's Hot 100 chart — helped Bieber solidify his comeback after years of a broken image that included arrests, public smoking and fainting onstage that led to hospitalization. But now, at 21, his music is in the spotlight.

"He dropped an album that was ... solid across the board," said DJ Enuff, a veteran radio personality for New York hip-hop station Hot 97. "There's urban radio stations across the country that play it, there's rhythmic crossover stations that can play it, there's pop stations that can play it."

"Purpose," which features downbeat R&B tracks, ballads and club-worthy anthems, debuted at No. 1 and sold an impressive

649,000 equivalent album units in its first week. Skrillex produced a number of the tracks; Ed Sheeran co-wrote the ballad "Love Yourself," a Top 5 hit; and guests include Nas, Big Sean, Travis Scott and newcomer Halsey.

And the Grammy-nominated "Where Are U Now" — first released on the album "Skrillex & Diplo Present Jack U" in February — helped Bieber achieve his first Top 10 hit since 2012's "Beauty and a Beat."

Some fans were surprised when they learned it was Bieber singing smoothly on the song. "I kept asking my girlfriend, 'Who is that guy? I keep hearing his voice.' She didn't even know until we actually had to go through the radio station's playlist to find out it was Justin Bieber," said 33-year-old Ennis Itheme of Jersey City, New Jersey, who works in rail service operations. "I'm a Justin Bieber fan now." Others say they're surprised they enjoy Bieber's new sound and are coming to terms with being Bieber fans. □

Idris Elba returns for another murder case as 'Luther'

FRAZIER MOORE
AP Television Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Idris Elba has many reasons for why he keeps coming back to "Luther."

"It's unfinished business, it's fertile ground," he explains. "The character continues to challenge me."

Detective Chief Inspector John Luther also challenges his fans, who are sure to greet him warmly for this, his fourth run, in the two-hour special airing at 9 p.m. EST Thursday on BBC America.

As usual, "Luther" finds its hero possessed by a grisly murder case: a serial killer with a cannibalistic bent.

Meanwhile, he remains haunted by Alice Morgan, the tantalizing sociopath from Season 1 who escaped arrest by Luther but became his twisted confidante. Conspicuously missing, her whereabouts unclear, she remains very

much on Luther's mind and a key part of this tale. Elba calls the demon-beset Luther "one of the closest characters in terms of who I am." It's a surprising claim, since, during this recent interview, he seems light-hearted in stylish casual wear, a marked contrast to the glum expression and no-nonsense suit Luther wears.

"I don't feel like I have to throw on too much of a character to play John Luther," says Elba, attempting to explain himself. "We shoot in the area I grew up in (East London), and I really let the writer take me on the journey. It's the most naturalistic I can be in a role."

Even Luther's distinctive walk — a slouching swagger, hands jammed in his pockets, pushing forward with staunch intent — is comfortably derived from Elba's own gait: "I tore my



Idris Elba portrays Detective Chief Inspector John Luther in a scene from "Luther." Elba stars in a two-hour special airing at 9 p.m. EST Thursday on BBC America. (Steffan Hill/BBC America via AP)

left Achilles, which make my left leg sort of limp — or swag!"

A strapping, towering presence with leading-man looks, Elba nonetheless

has been able to transform himself profoundly for his roles, such as the brutal leader of an African rebel army in his recent film "Beasts of No Nation," as

Nelson Mandela in "Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom" and as Stringer Bell, the strictly business Baltimore drug lord, in the HBO series "The Wire." □

In Israel, Arab Chefs Carve Out a Distinct Cuisine

DANIELLA CHESLOW

Associated Press

HAIFA, Israel (AP) — Palestinian chef Johnny Goric has cooked for President Barack Obama and served as a judge on the

Palestinian cooking has received much less international attention — until now. This week, two dozen Arab chefs and a handful of Jewish ones descended on the northern port city of

among the country's Jewish population. For years, the income gap stifled a gourmet scene. In recent years Arab citizens have reached new heights in areas like music, acting,

said when he opened his first restaurant in 1979, Israeli customers just "wanted hummus, french fries and salad." Now they are embracing his use of local ingredients such as arugula, wild spinach, asparagus and chicory.

Younger Arab chefs are pushing the bar, opening a tapas restaurant in the northern city of Acre and revisiting ancient Syrian recipes in Haifa. Yet the political environment remains a challenge for this new generation of chefs. The festival took place amid a three-month outbreak of violence. Since mid-September, Palestinians have killed 19 Israelis in shootings, stabbings and attacks using cars. At least 109 Palestinians have died by Israeli fire in the same period; 73 of them are said by Israel to be attackers. Abbas said his restaurants have suffered heavy losses as Jewish Israeli clients hesitate to enter Arab towns for dinner.

At the same time, the doors that are opening to

devoted to Palestinian cuisine began in Ramallah in 2012 but ceased publication within months, and Palestinian Masterchef folded after one season for lack of budget. A rare exception to the anonymity of Palestinian food was "The Gaza Kitchen," a cookbook published in 2013 via crowdfunding to celebrate the food of the coastal enclave.

Peter Nasir, a restaurant owner in the West Bank city of Ramallah, said his Palestinian clients are reluctant to "gamble" their limited incomes on new dishes and often ask for old-fashioned classics such as chicken cordon bleu.

"Israelis are more willing to try something new. Here you put some pomegranates in a salad and people start flipping out," Nasir said. He said he would not rush to collaborate with Israeli chefs "who at some point will put on a uniform and point a gun at you."

At the Haifa food festival, the warm relations between Arab and Jewish



Israeli Arab chef Johnny Goric poses during a Arab Food Festival in Haifa, Israel. Goric has cooked for President Barack Obama and served as a judge on the Palestinian version of Masterchef, a reality TV cooking show. In July, he put out his first cookbook, but rather than publish in his native Arabic or in English, Goric's debut recipes are in Hebrew.

(AP Photo/Dan Balilty)

Palestinian version of Masterchef, a reality TV cooking show. In July, he put out his first cookbook — but rather than publish in his native Arabic or in English, Goric's debut recipes are in Hebrew. His book highlights something unexpected about the rising class of Palestinian and Israeli Arab chefs, who are breaking out of the shadow of Israel's bustling food scene with new restaurants, cookbooks and culinary schools: their best clients are often Israelis.

In the past two decades, the Israeli cuisine has flourished on the international scene. Last year the gourmet food and wine publication, Saveur Magazine, named Tel Aviv an "outstanding" food destination. The local edition of Masterchef is popular among Israelis and a homegrown cooking show, Game of Chefs, was recently remade for German television.

Although it relies on the same local ingredients,

Haifa for four days of celebrating Arab cuisine. The festival was founded by the Arab Israeli chef Nof Atamna-Ismaeel, who shot to national acclaim when she won Israeli Masterchef in 2014 and regularly appears on food programs in the country.

At the Haifa festival, curious crowds milled around a restaurant kitchen while Jewish Israeli celebrity chef Meir Adoni prepared hummus dishes alongside the Arab Israeli restaurateur Hussam Abbas.

"Jews and Arabs can learn about each other's cooking traditions," said Atamna-Ismaeel, who wants to use the festival as a pilot for a culinary school she plans to open in her hometown of Baqa al-Gharbiya in northern Israel.

Around a fifth of Israel's population is Arab. Arab citizens of Israel have equal legal rights but face discrimination in government budgets, employment and housing. Poverty rates are higher among Arabs than



This photo shows a Shishbarak dish made by the Israeli Arab chef Johnny Goric during a Palestinian food Festival in Haifa, Israel.

(AP Photo/Dan Balilty)

sports, journalism — and culinary arts.

A major challenge to Arab chefs has been breaking out of narrow expectations of Israeli customers, said Abbas, owner of El Babur, a chain of three restaurants in northern Israel. He

Arab Israelis remain mostly closed to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, largely cut off from Israeli customers and publishers, and limited by Israeli restrictions on travel.

There is no Palestinian TV food network. A magazine

chefs offered a rare bright spot amid a gloomy period in the region.

Israeli chef Adoni, who traces his roots to Morocco, spooned a rich stew of lamb, chicken and Jerusalem artichoke over creamy hummus. □